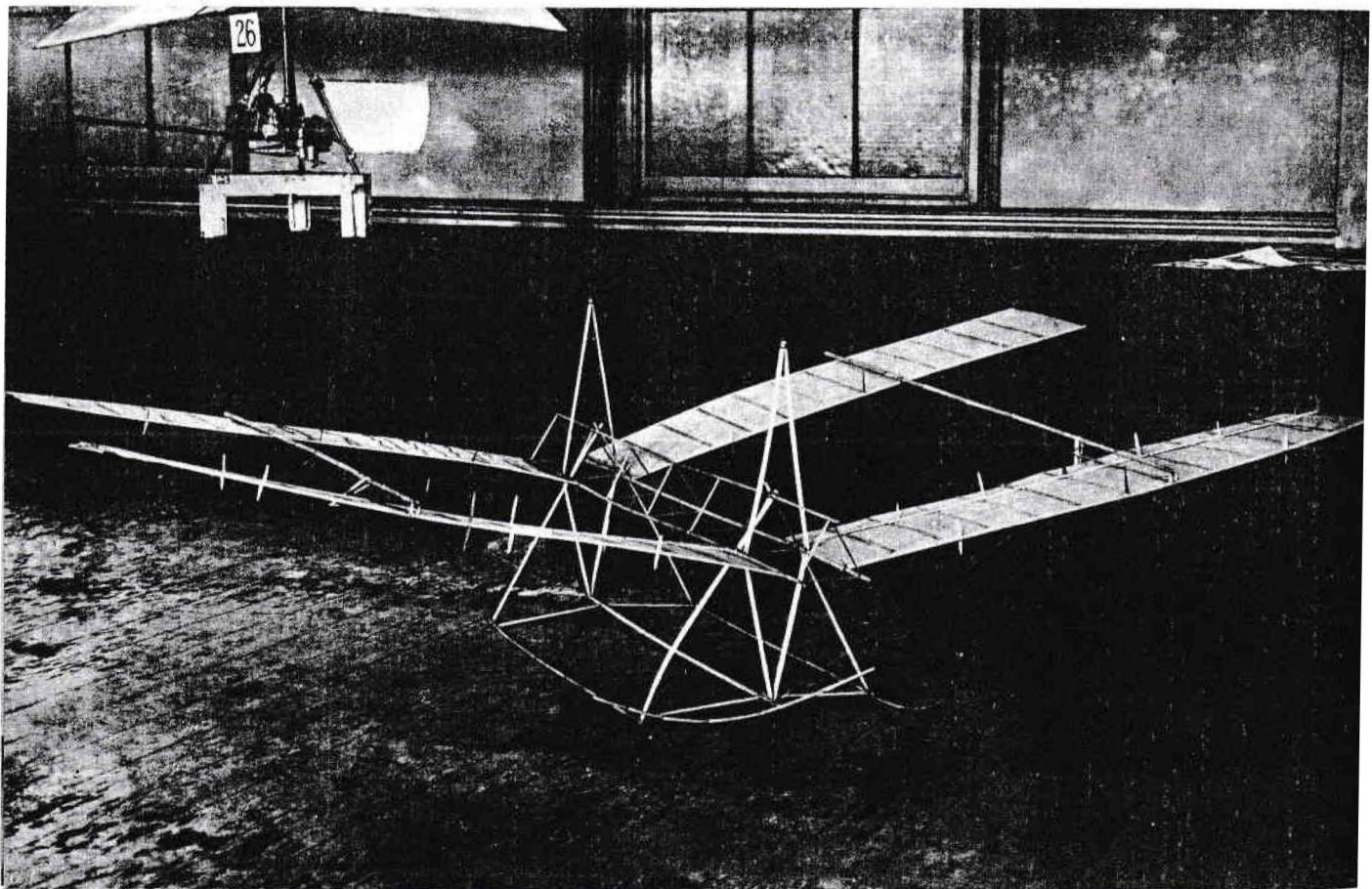


and which, even now, familiarity can never rob of its charm . . . You wonderful aerial record breakers of today and of the years to come, whose exploits I may only marvel at and envy, I have experienced something that can never be yours and can never be taken away from me – the rapture, the glory and the glamour of “the very beginning”.’

An outstanding figure among these early seekers for ‘the rapture, the glory and the glamour’ was Alliott Verdon Roe, who, later, was to head the great firm of A. V. Roe (Avro), Manchester, England, that manufactured the *Anson* and *Lancaster* bombers and other exceptionally successful aircraft. A short account by Roe of the start of his career was published in the first issue of the *Amateur Aviator* in April 1912. His reminiscences, which showed how he increased the size of his models, in easy stages, until they became full-size airplanes, are of absorbing interest, today, to students of aeronautical history:



‘... My first serious model was made on the lines of an Albatross, whose graceful antics I had admired so much when at sea as an engineer.

From my point of view this model was not a success (at least not so successful as I could have wished). I therefore tried another on the same lines as that of the Wright Brothers, of whom I had just at that time heard. I quickly found out that it was advisable to have a large plane in front or behind and from that time constructed my models with such, and good results were obtained with either type.

Gliders I made by the score, and very soon I found myself loaded with basketfuls of them.

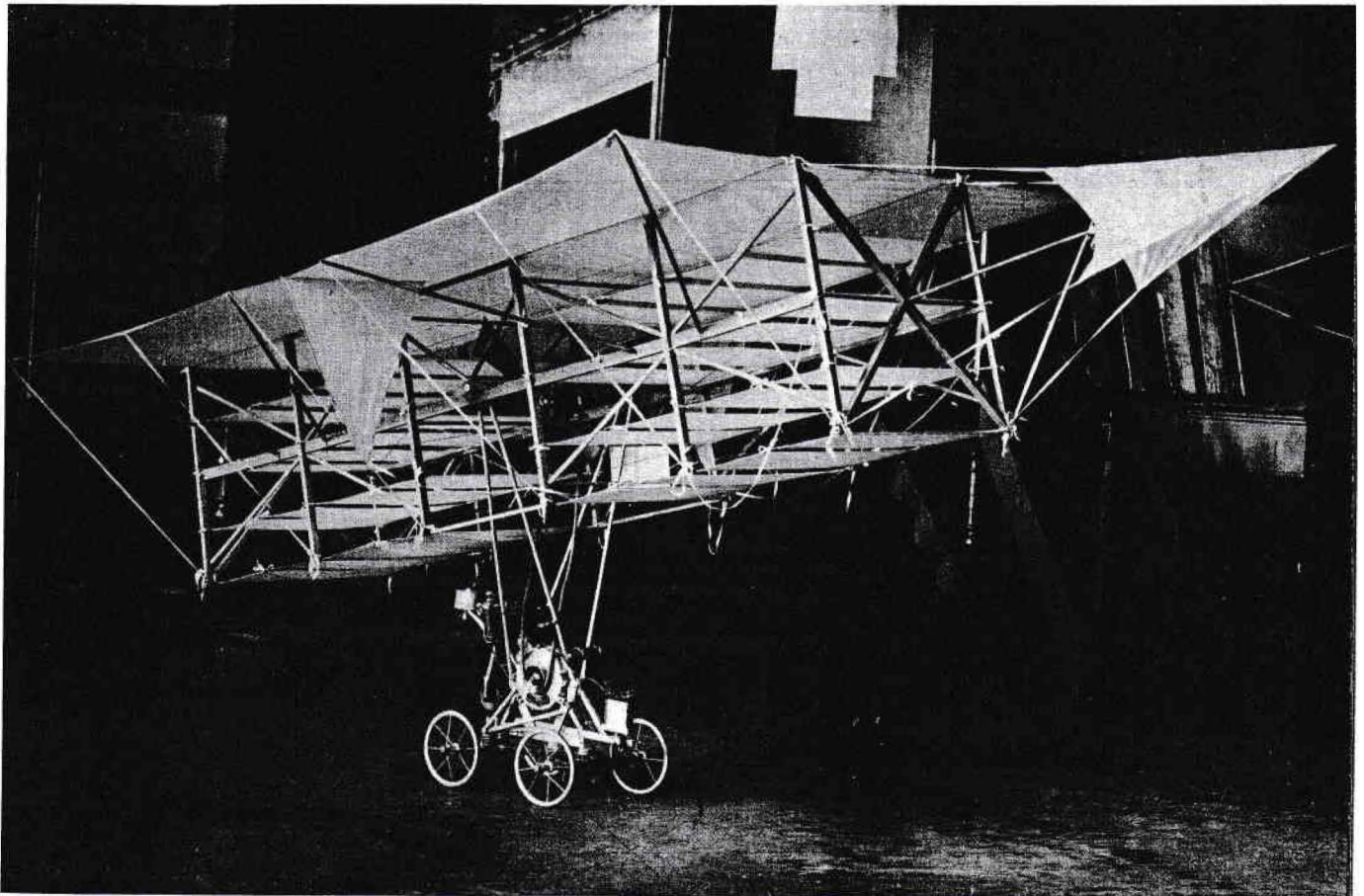
About this time the *Daily Mail* offered £250 in three prizes for models making certain flights, so I immediately set to work and made a three-foot model, which I had flying within ten days of the competition.

As there was plenty of time to spare, I made some others eight

32 Left – Mr (later, Sir) Alliott Verdon Roe

33 Left below – A. V. Roe’s ‘Langley’, seen at an exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, London, in 1907

34 Below – Another model at the 1907 Agricultural Hall exhibition



feet long by eight feet wide, and it was ultimately with one of these I won the *Daily Mail* Prize in April 1907, just five years ago this month.

Thus encouraged, I set to work on a full-size machine fitted with a 24 h.p. Antoinette engine, and in June 1908 managed to obtain a few short hops with it at Brooklands (airfield and race track).

Previous to this in the latter part of 1907, I ought to add, I obtained many flights in a machine towed behind a car. I used to regulate the height up and down by the front elevator. On one occasion the machine broke away from the car, and I was powerless to prevent the smash that followed. (They generally ended that way, and many exciting adventures befell me.) I remember vividly my boot heel was torn away as I was dragged among the wreckage. The tower's instructions were to let go as soon as the machine swerved away from behind the car, being attached to about 60 feet of cable; but I had the greatest difficulty in getting new hands to do this.

Unfortunately, the then manager of the Brooklands track was not at all sympathetic towards aeroplanes or aviation, in fact, instead of receiving encouragement, reasonable requests were refused and every obstacle placed in my way.

It was only on condition I would lend my shed on Race Days that I was allowed to stop at all, and just as I was reaching the hopping stage I was requested to remove my goods.

The shed was purchased by the authorities for a mere fraction of its cost.

After this I returned to London and started on designs and plans for a triplane with the engine forward, very much like our last triplane in general appearance.

After building the machine I rented some railway arches on Lea Marshes. Here many amusing and unpleasant experiences befell me.

Although the engine was only a 9 h.p. J.A.P. heavy motorcycle type, I managed to get many short flights rising to twenty feet in height.

Early one quiet morning I was just about to start some trials when the ground inspector of the Lea Marshes turned up and ordered me off the ground.

I therefore went to the next ground which I had used previously, but had not been there long before a gentleman in blue, plainly labelled policeman, bobbed up and took my name and address. Just at that time, however, Blériot flew the Channel and this made all the difference in the Inspector's attitude, for he too became interested, so all was easy and plain sailing again, and I was allowed to continue . . .

Radio-controlled model of the Shinn 2150 posed in front of the prototype

Overleaf, a museum model of Sir George Cayley's 'convertiplane'

As flying passed out of the purely experimental stages, information became more generally available to model-makers through the medium of the press. In the early days of flying in Britain – for instance – the magazines *Aero* and, later, *Flight* provided short sections intended specially for aeromodellers. By 1913, a little more space for articles on model aeronautics was being allotted regularly in such magazines as *Model Engineer* and *Practical Mechanics*. *Model Aircraft* and *Model Aeroplane Constructor* were the first British periodicals to cater especially for devotees of the new hobby but they were quickly overtaken by the *Aeromodeller* which, managed with great efficiency by the legendary D. A. Russell, was largely responsible for the universal growth of interest in the subject.

Today, models of airplanes of historic vintages are made and collected with great enthusiasm in many different parts of the world. Organizations such as the Society of Antique Modelers in America and the Antique Model Aeroplane Society in Britain exist to keep modellers with these special interests in touch with one another and to make generally available to their members all the relevant information about ancient aircraft, and ancient models, that can possibly be collected. The approximately forty members of the British society believe that they have, between them, just about every plan, magazine or model publication ever produced in the English language prior to 1950!

A detail of a museum model of
Henri Giffard's airship, which first
flew in 1852, showing the single-
cylinder steam engine