

A celebration of Charles Rolls

As Monmouth prepares to celebrate the life of one of its most famous sons, the *Beacon* presents a special pull-out detailing the life and legacy of Charles Rolls, and the events taking place in the town to commemorate the centenary of his death

CHARLES Rolls is most famous for all he achieved in his short life.

Co-founder of the Rolls-Royce empire, the motoring and aviation pioneer was the first man to ever make a solo flight across the English Channel.

He also became the first ever English fatality in an aviation accident on 12th July 1910.

Despite being taken at the young age of 32, his achievements were outstanding. Among other things, Charles made over 170 balloon ascents, founded the Royal Aero Club in 1903 and in that same year he also won the Gordon Bennett Gold Medal for the longest single flight time.

His interest not only lay in flight, but also in motoring.

In January 1903, with the help

or four cylinder cars, Rolls was impressed with the two-cylinder Royce 10 and on 23rd December 1904, he agreed to take all the cars Royce could make.

These were of two, three, four and six cylinders and would be badged as Rolls-Royce.

Their first project as business partners, the Rolls-Royce 10 hp, was unveiled at the Paris Salon in December 1904.

In early advertising, though, it was Rolls' name which featured more prominently than that of Royce.

It wasn't until 1906 that Rolls and Royce formally cemented their partnership by creating Rolls-Royce Limited.

Rolls was appointed as Technical Managing Director and he provided the financial backing and business acumen.

Royce brought his technical expertise and together they went on to create some of the most highly regarded car models of all time, including the first British armoured car, which was used in both world wars.

Despite the fact that Rolls was born in London, he remained in contact with his family, who took residence at The Hendre, Monmouth.

The Hendre was a full scale Victorian country house in which generations of Rolls' ancestors lived.

Today the Hendre is now home to the 'Rolls of Monmouth' golf course, which expands over 6,733 yards and is visited by thousands of people every year.

A history of The Hendre

THE Hendre started life as a shooting lodge, for John Rolls (1776 – 1837) and for the first 100 years it was expanded in various ways.

The first expansion was completed by the architect George Vaughan Maddox, who rebuilt parts of the south wing in 1830.

John Rolls' successor, John Etherington Welch Rolls, continued the mansion's development, using Thomas Henry Wyatt as his architect, who created the great hall, improved the park, and continued the enlargement of the south wing between 1837 and 1858.

In 1872, the development continued with the removal of the old stables to be replaced with the present coach house and loose boxes. At the same time the billiard room, smoking room and dining room, were added.

These final two stages of expansion were undertaken by John Etherington Welch Rolls' son, JA Rolls, who went on to become Lord Llangattock and the father of Charles.

Lord Llangattock died in 1912, two years after the death of Charles in the aviation accident.

Lord Llangattock's heir died at the Somme in 1916, causing the barony to become extinct. The Harding-Rolls branch of the family continued to live at The Hendre until 1987 when, following a time-share operation, it passed out of their hands.

The life of Charles Rolls

24th August, 1877 Charles Stewart Rolls, son of John Allan Rolls, is born in Berkeley Square, London

1884 - 93 Rolls goes to prep school in Berkshire and later Eton

1892 John Allan Rolls becomes Baron Llangattock of the Hendre

1894 Rolls studies mechanical and applied sciences at college in Cambridge

Sees first motorcar on holiday in France

1896 Buys first car, a 3.75 hp Peugeot Phaeton

1898 Gets BA degree

1899 Enters first motor race, from Paris to Ostend. Finishes second in tourist class in a Panhard

1900 Aged 23, Rolls wins the Thousand Miles Reliability Trial around Britain. The future King George V and Queen Mary visit The Hendre, and go for their first ride in a car, driven by Rolls

1901 Becomes a founder member of the Auto Club "for the encouragement... of aerial locomotion in all its forms"

1902 Starts selling cars as CS Rolls & Co, automotive agents and dealers, in Fulham

1904 Meets Henry Royce for the first time in Manchester and the two agree to form a partnership

The first Rolls-Royce cars are built

1906 Rolls-Royce Ltd is officially formed and produces the first 'Silver Ghost'

Rolls meets the Wright brothers in New York

1907 Rolls experiences powered flight for the first time in an airship

1908 Rolls' first flight in a plane – Wilbur Wright takes him on a three-and-a-half mile flight over Le Mans in France

The Rolls-Royce factory opens in Derby

1909 Rolls resigns as technical director of Rolls-Royce and takes delivery of his first plane, a Short-Wright No 1

1910; 8th March Rolls is given the Aero Club's Pilot Certificate No 2

2nd June Rolls makes the first double crossing of the English Channel. To prove that he had, in fact, completed the whole trip, Rolls dropped a bag of coins from his aircraft into a French field

12th July Rolls is killed, aged 32, in a plane crash when the tail of his Wright Flyer brakes off at Hengistbury Airfield, Bournemouth, making him the first British man to be killed in an aeronautical accident, and the 11th internationally

16th July Rolls is buried at the Church of St. Cadoc in Llangattock-Vibon-Avel



of £6,600 provided by his father, he started one of Britain's first car dealerships in Fulham, CS Rolls & Co.

Here, he imported and sold French Peugeot and Belgian Minerva vehicles.

Charles met his soon-to-be business-partner for the first time on 4th May 1904 during a pre-arranged meeting at the Midland Hotel, Manchester.

Despite his preference for three

Compiled by Philip Wilkinson-Jones and Laura Thomas



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Charles Rolls Commemoration Day

Free activities for all the family at Monmouth Museum Saturday 10th July 2010

Join Monmouth Museum as we mark the 100 anniversary of the death of
Charles Stewart Rolls;
pioneer aviator, co-founder of Rolls-Royce plc and local resident.

You can....

- Meet Charles Rolls and Henry Royce
- Make your own Rolls-Royce car, bi-plane or Charles Rolls statue
- Try on Victorian & Edwardian costume
- Explore Monmouth with our new Rolls Town Trail
- Discover more about Charles Rolls and his family, the Llangattocks, on a guided tour of Monmouth
- Investigate a real Rolls-Royce Viper jet engine
- Visit the So - Why not? Exhibition
- Take Charlie Bear's Transport Challenge

Entrance and activities FREE - Museum open 10.00 – 5.00

Monmouth Museum, Priory Street, Monmouth, NP25 3XA Telephone: 01600 710630
Children must be accompanied by an adult
Supported by The Charles Rolls Commemoration Project

