

BULLETIN ISSUE NO. 16 – OCTOBER 2024



Count Louis Vorow Zborowski

Raffle



Many thanks to those of you who have supported the monthly raffles by donating prizes for use the draws, they have all been gratefully appreciated.

If you would like to donate prizes to future raffles, biscuits, chocolates, wine, beer etc are all acceptable proving they are in date! Books and artwork etc will also be accepted.

HistoryFare Events

October

26th - Guided Tour – Airborne & Commando General Tour

November

7th – Monthly talk - High Society: Flying Foxhunters and Airborne Aristocrats

9th - Guided Tour - Melton Mowbray History Trail

30th - Guided Tour – Painting the Town Red

December

5th – Monthly talk – Melton Mowbray in WW2

To keep up to date with forthcoming HistoryFare events and to book a place, visit my website <https://historyfare.co.uk/events/>

HistoryFare Gift Vouchers

Looking for the perfect present for a friend or family member?

A gift they'll always remember!

HistoryFare gift vouchers are the perfect gift for friends, family and colleagues who love getting outdoors, discovering history, or exploring new places.

HistoryFare provide guided walks and talks across the historic market town of Melton Mowbray.

Give a HistoryFare gift voucher!

For more information, see my website: [HistoryFare Gift Vouchers - HistoryFare](https://historyfare.co.uk/gift-vouchers/)



Count Louis Vorow Zborowski



Saturday 19th October 2024 was the 100th anniversary of the death of Count Louis Vorow Zborowski and I had the privilege of attending St James' Church at Burton Lazars for the service of remembrance and celebration for his life.

Louis was born on 20th February 1895 in London to American parents, who had moved to England nine years earlier.

His father, Count William Elliott Morris Zborowski, known as Elliott, in 1885, having heard about hunting in England, visited in 1885, where he was welcomed with enthusiasm, and was soon riding with the Quorn. He had been hunting from the Harboro Hotel when purchased Coventry House from

Sir Frederick Johnstone for £2,500 in March 1886.

Elliott loved his horse racing and hunting and took part in the infamous Melton Midnight Steeplechase on the 10th March 1890, where even after falling off his horse and remounting it, he finished second.



Coventry House

In 1892, on a return visit to the United States, Elliott married the wealthy American heiress, born Margaret Laura Astor Carey a granddaughter of William Backhouse Astor, Sr. of the prominent Astor family. She had been Madame de Stuers before her messy divorce from Alphonse Lambert Eugène, Chevalier de Stuers. Their New England friends disapproved of their behaviour, which ultimately meant they spent even more time in Britain, where few in their hunting set were troubled by the Countess being a divorcee.

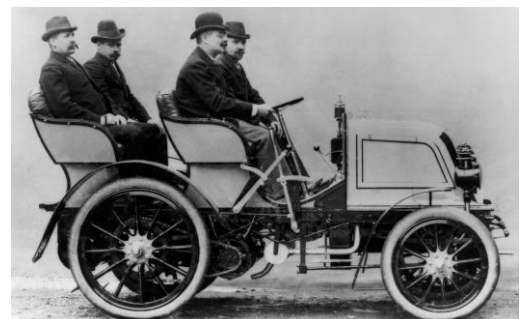
Their first child, Martin, was born 7th August 1893, but died just a few weeks later on the 25th and was buried at Burton Lazars. In February 1895 a second son was born, Louis, and this time the child was more healthy.

In 1898, following a friend's motorised visit, Elliott bought a de Dion Tricycle and learnt how to drive and maintain it. Driving became a new passion, and he covered 5,000 miles in 4 months. His wife Margaret,



Elliot Zborowski in 1902

thought he should have a real car and not just a single-seater tricycle and Elliott agreed, buying a Daimler Phoenix after visiting their factory.

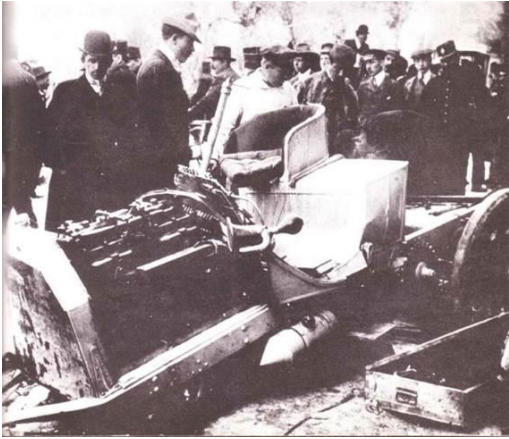


Daimler Phoenix

A few weeks later there was a dinner-party at his house in which all the men had something in common: they owned a

motor car. After dinner, the Count surprised the party when he announced that all his horses were to go as he had lost interest in them.

He was an all round sportsman but particularly liked Mercedes racing cars. However, he was tragically killed in an accident whilst racing a Mercedes Sixty in the La Turbie Hill climb near Nice in France on 1st April 1903.



The wrecked Mercedes Sixty

According to an article published on the 3rd April 1903, in the Melton Mowbray Times and Vale of Belvoir Gazette, it states “At last a car came in sight. It bore the news that Count Zborowski, driving a 60hp Mercedes car, had only left the starting post a few hundred yards when, in making the first sharp turn, at the commencing ascent of the Corniche Road, he cannoned into the rock lining the road at this point on his offside, with the result that he and his companion had been thrown out with terrible force. Death must have been instantaneous in the case of the Count, for his skull was crushed almost out of all recognition and his neck dislocated.”

His companion, the Marquis de Pollange, survived the crash but died of his injuries shortly afterwards.

It is said that the cause of the accident was that the bulky cufflinks that fastened the cuff of his shirt got caught with the hand accelerator located at the steering wheel.

Elliotts body was returned to Melton Mowbray and following a service at St Mary’s church, his body was taken to Burrton Lazars, to be buried alongside his son, Martin. Following his death, he left effects to the value of £6357 17s 8d to his widow Margaret.

In 1904, Margaret laid on a ‘sumptuous meat tea’ for the poor of the town in the Corn Exchange and according to newspaper reports, over 450 people attended. She was also quite a popular musician playing the pianoforte at various concerts held in town. Additionally, she was appointed a vice-president of the Melton Mowbray Chrysanthemum Society.

In a 1908 edition of the “Throne and Country” magazine, she was described as “A very charming and attractive personality is the Countess Zborowski, whose husband, Count Zborowski, lost his life in such a terrible manner in the memorable Continental motor race. The Countess who has great distinction of manner and much personal charm, is a well known personage in Society; she is the owner of some excessively beautiful and costly jewels, among them being pearls of great lustre and value.”

In 1910 his mother bought the Higham Park estate at Bridge near Canterbury in Kent and immediately commissioned a £50,000 refurbishment of the house from the architect Joseph Sawyer.



Higham Park

Margaret died in 1911 and was buried with her husband and son at Burton Lazars. This now left Louis as an orphan at the age of sixteen and he apparently became the fourth richest under 21 year old in the world after inheriting £11 million pounds (£1.3 billion in today's money) following his mothers death. He also inherited real estate in the US including 7 acres of land in Manhattan and several blocks on 5th Avenue in New York.



The Aston Martin TT1 & TT2 at Burton Lazars

Louis not only inherited his parents wealth but also his father's passion for motor racing. He was an early patron of Aston Martin, and raced for them at Brooklands and in the 1922 French Grand Prix.

Aston Martin produced two cars, called the TT1 & TT2, which Louis paid for at £10,000 per car, for the 1922 Isle of Man Tourist Trophy race but they were

too late so they entered them into the French Grand Prix instead.

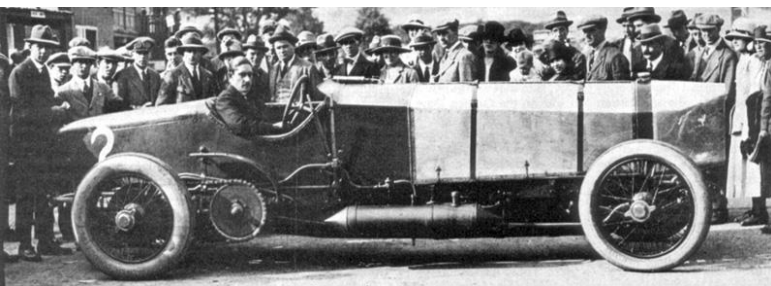
Zborowski went on to design and build four of his own racing cars in the stables at Higham Park and workshops in Canterbury, assisted by his engineer and co-driver Captain Clive Gallop, who was later racing engineer to the "Bentley Boys".

During WW1, Clive Gallop served in the Royal Flying Corps as a pilot and at one time he commanded No 56 Sqn, the same Sqn that aces such as James McCudden and Albert Balls served on.

Whilst Gallop provided technical expertise for the chassis and mechanical elements, Zborowski turned to Bligh Brothers of Canterbury (a century-old local coachbuilding firm) to provide the bespoke coach work for these projects. He eventually acquired this business outright in order to retain a personal staff of coachbuilders.



Captain Clive Gallop



Louis in the driving seat of Chitty Bang Bang 1 at Brooklands

The first car was powered by a 23,093 cc six-cylinder Maybach aero engine and called "Chitty Bang Bang".

A second "Chitty Bang Bang" was powered by 18,825 cc Benz aero engine.

A third car was based on a Mercedes 28/95, but fitted with a 14,778 cc 6-cylinder Mercedes aero engine and was referred to as the White Mercedes. These cars achieved some success at Brooklands.

Another car, also built at Higham Park with a huge 27-litre American Liberty aero engine, was called the "Higham Special".

In January 1922 Zborowski, his wife Vi, Clive Gallop and Pixi Marix together with a couple of mechanics took Chitty Bang Bang 2 and the White Mercedes across the Mediterranean for a drive into the Sahara Desert, in the tracks of Citroën's Kégresse-track-equipped expedition.

Zborowski drove a Bugatti in the 1923 Indianapolis 500 and then in the 1923 Italian Grand Prix at Monza he drove a car designed by American engineer Harry Miller, the single-seat "American Miller 122".

He next joined the Mercedes team in 1924 taking part in the Italian Grand Prix at Monza but tragically was killed after his car skidded on a curve and turned over twice.

After Zborowski's death the "Higham Special" or Chitty Bang Bang 4, was purchased by J.G. Parry-Thomas who improved the car and christened her "Babs" to make bids on the land speed record.

In April 1926 J.G. Parry-Thomas successfully took the Land Speed Record at over 170 mph at Pendine Sands. Thomas' second attempt at the same location in 1927 turned out fatal. At over 100 mph the car overturned and caught fire, killing the driver. Following the inquest into Thomas's death, Babs's seats were slashed, the glass in the dials smashed, and the car was buried in the sand dunes at Pendine.

In 1967 Owen Wyn Owen decided to excavate and restore Babs. The site of the burial was identified from old photographs, but it was found to be within the perimeter of the present-day rocket establishment.

The military authorities granted permission for the excavation on condition that Parry-Thomas's next of kin did not object. It took Wyn Owen two years to locate a living relative, a nephew living in Walsall, and finally the wreck was recovered.[6] This recovery was controversial at the time, less so after the successful restoration. The prevailing opinion was that the wreck would be unsalvageable for anything more than a pitiful museum display. Few expected that the wreck would ever resemble a car again, let alone be restored to running order.

"Babs" was in very poor condition with much of the bodywork having corroded away, so a new body had to be constructed, melding in where possible any existing original material. The mechanical running gear though was in good condition. Even where components could not be used, they were sufficiently preserved to act as a pattern. The engine was salvageable, but many new replacement parts had to be made from original designs.

"Babs" has been restored and can be seen either at the Pendine Sands Museum of speed in the summer months or in the Brooklands Museum during other months of the year.



Chitty Bang Bang 4 "Babs" at Goodwood in 2005

There is uncertainty as to where the name "Chitty Bang Bang" comes from. One theory is that it was due to the sound the aero engines made but there is another version which stems back to WW1 and the words of a song sung by members of the Royal Flying Corps. The 'Chit' refers to the passes that the troops had to get to give them permission to leave barracks and go into the local town where a lot of troops visited the local brothels, which I am sure you can work out where the 'bang bang' comes from!

RAF Melton Mowbray Football Team 1944-45 Season



The top class football team of the 1944–5 season that represented the RAF at Melton Mowbray. Back row, left to right: Andy Bramley, Bill Maclean, –?–, Flight Lieutenant Ames. Centre row: –?–, Alan Brown, Ted Sale, –?–, McKie, Oswald Destine, Roy Bentley. Front row: Clem Stevenson, Jimmy Learmonth, Fred Moon, Group Captain Gomez, Bert Brocklehurst, Fred Butcher, Jack Smith. Bill Maclean was the trainer for Leicester City Football Club before and after the Second World War.

The team joined Leicestershire Senior League for the 1944-45 season and finished as Leicestershire Senior League runners-up and winners of the Loughborough Hospital Cup, Sibley Charity Cup & Blaby Infirmary Cup. They left Leicestershire Senior League in 1945

SEASON	LEAGUE	P	W	D	L	F	A	P	POS
1944-45	LEICS	26	17	4	5	111	51	38	2/14

Jimmy Learmonth was a professional footballer playing for Glasgow Rangers before he joined the RAF and while stationed at Melton, naturally he was part of the RAF Melton Mowbray football team. The station team had just won the Loughborough Charity Cup in a local tournament. The CO at the time, Gp Capt Gomez, who was himself a football fan and proud of his team, invited them back to the Officers Mess for celebration drinks.

The CO was doing his party piece and drinking a pint of beer down in one go when Jimmy said to his team-mates “Where’s he putting that, has he got hollow legs?” To Jimmy’s horror the CO heard his comment and spat out his drink in a burst of laughter and replied “Its better than that Jimmy” at the same time as tapping his leg. To the amazement of everyone, it was a false leg as he lost his real one in a flying accident earlier in his career. Jimmy immediately thought ‘I’ve gone and done it now’ but Gomez just laughed about it.

In addition to Jimmy Learmonth, the RAF Melton Mowbray FC team contained several other professional players such as Cpl Andy Bramley who was the team manager and came from Anstey, Bill Maclean was the Leics City trainer, Clem Stevenson played for Huddersfield.

Also serving at Melton was the Geordie and England player Ivor Broadis but not sure if he’s on the team photograph. During the Second World War, Ivor served as a Navigator completing 500 flying hours in Wellingtons and Lancasters, although he was never on a bombing mission! During a career spanning nineteen years from 1942 to 1961, Broadis represented Carlisle United, Sunderland, Manchester City, Newcastle United and Queen of the South, gaining 14 caps and scoring eight goals for England at international level. Broadis played at inside forward; after retiring from playing in 1961, he pursued a career as a football journalist.

New Memorial Dedicated

On Friday 25th October 2024, a new memorial plaque commemorating the men of the 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment who died as a result of campaign service during WW2 was dedicated at St Wulfrum's Church in Grantham as part of their Arnhem 80 evening of reflection and commemoration.



The inscription reads:

We came from war
To go back to war
So few returned
We are no more.

The Second Battalion, The Parachute regiment arrived in this area from North Africa via Sicily in December 1943.

In September 1944 they departed from Saltby for Arnhem. Seventeen 'fell in' after the battle for the roll all.

They were part of the memorial service for the 1st Airborne Division in this Church in December 1944.

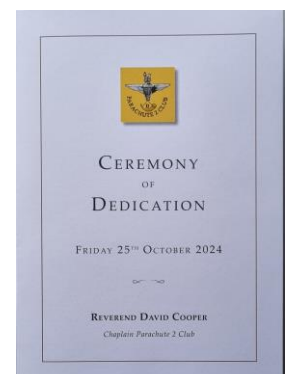
The last survivor died in 2022.

This plaque is in memory of those men of the Second Battalion who died as a result of campaign service during WW2.

God grant unto them eternal peace.

The plaque sits proudly next to the Standard of the Parachute 2 Club that was formed in 1969 by members of the 2nd Battalion who fought together during WW2.

The Club was dissolved in 2022 following the death of the last surviving member and the Standard was laid up at St Wulfrum's in June 2023.



Former Melton's Policeman Award



Former Melton Police Force Officer Henry Thomas Griffin, who served in the RAF was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in September 1944.

He was serving as a Lancaster pilot with No 156 Sqn at RAF Upwood in Cambridgeshire with the elite Pathfinder Force. He took part in the battle of Berlin and completed many bombing missions to this city.

After the war, he returned to policing and was promoted to Sergeant. He was a keen rugby player and in 1953, he 'came out of retirement' to play in the Melton Police Rugger XV against his old team, Melton RFC which ended in a pointless draw.

Later on, he became the 'boss' at Oakham Police Station.

Safely Back from Arnhem

The Melton Times published on 27th October 1944 announced that Melton lad, Lance Sergeant John 'Jack' W Rate, eldest son of Mr & Mrs C Rate of Egerton Lodge, had returned safely from Arnhem.

He had been serving with the Royal Corps of Signals since the start of the war where he escaped from occupied France in the early days of the war. He joined the Airborne Division on it's formation and served with it in Sicily and Italy.

With his unit, he took part in Operation Market Garden and when the Airborne men were leaving Arnhem on September 27th, he chose to swim across the River Rhine, rather than stay on the riverbank being shot at by German snipers.

After swimming some distance, he was picked up by a boat and he told his mother "I was very glad too, for I'd had no food for six days and only rain water to drink and I felt I was getting quickly exhausted".



Thank you for your support!

Till next time!

Please feel free to share this bulletin with whoever you think may be interested.

For any enquiries or to submit articles, please email Brian at meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com