

PAM BUFTON : HILDA BEATRICE HERBERT

Here, is the story of a lady who beat the odds. **HILDA BEATRICE HERBERT**-(1864-1943)- born in Vauxhall, London as one of 9 children

Career :-Aviator, aircraft manufacturer and flying instructor

Character –single-minded in her interests - Hilda loved speed - cars and later aeroplanes. Educated at home and then the National Art training school – exhibited her work in South Kensington. Fluent in French.

At 19 years old she went to Egypt - then Berlin where she trained as a nurse.

1909 Hilda attended Blackpool’s first flying meet with her husband- **Maurice Hewlett. Married 1888** They had a son and daughter.

At Blackpool she met Gustave Blondeau and they started a business partnership at Brooklands, Surrey –by 1919 they had built 10 types of aircraft. They moved the firm to Battersea to expand later.

Hilda ‘s key interest was producing a training school for women.

She was known as having an Eton crop, a ruddy complexion, unusual clothes and often seen driving a fast car.

She was described as an indefatigable worker, and a shrewd business woman.

However her husband stated the **‘Women will never be as successful in Aviation as men – they have not got the right type of nerve’**.

He was wrong as she, with her partner, started a flying school in Brooklands and Hilda at 47 years in 1911 took her flying test and **became the first woman pilot!**

At the school they taught Geoffrey de Haviland, Thomas Sopwith and many other famous men to fly. Her son was one of them and received a DSO for war service.

In 1928 (after the war) she moved to New Zealand to be with her daughter and set up another flying club. At her request she was buried at sea in 1943.