

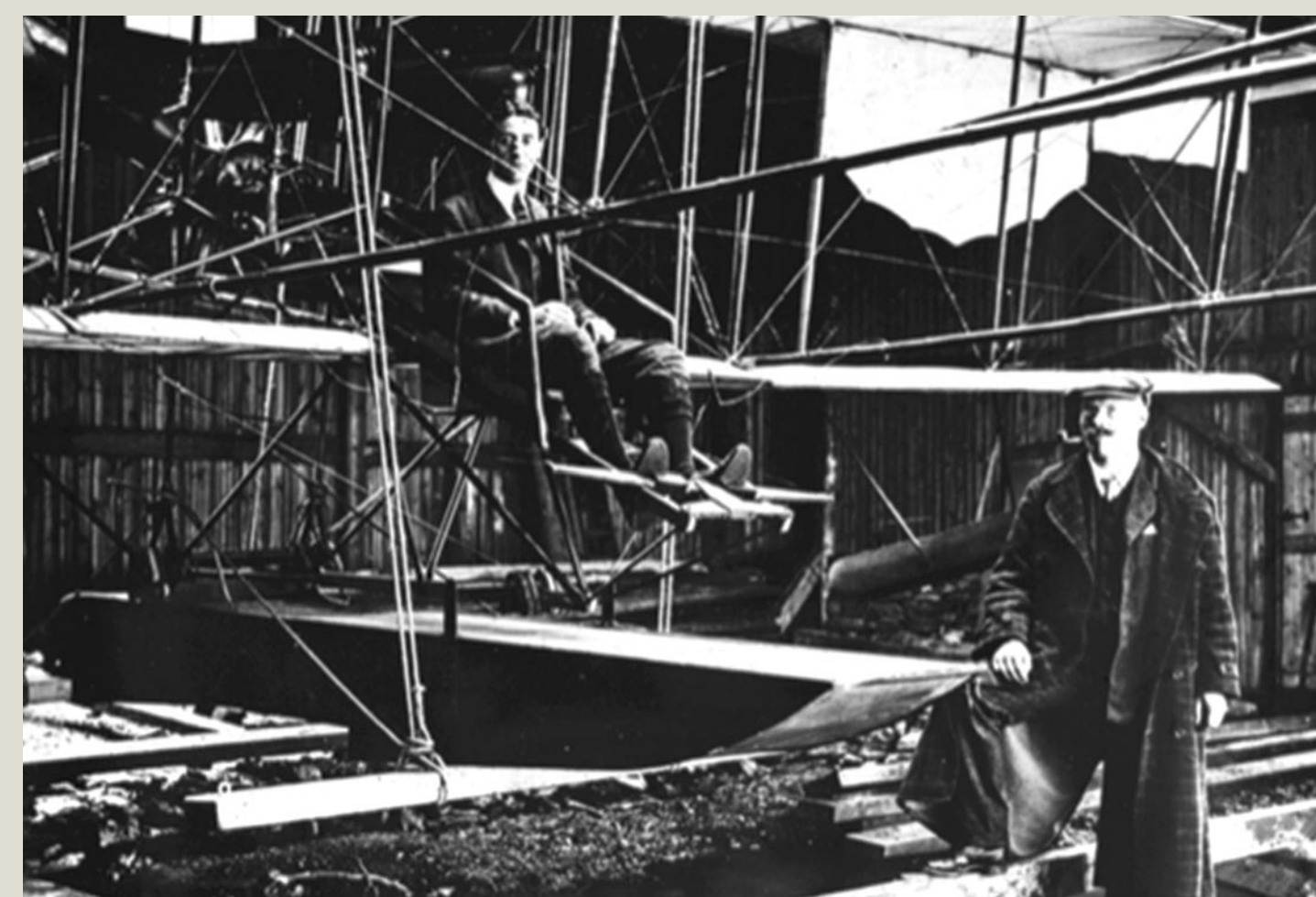
# THE STORY OF WATERBIRD



*Waterbird flight. November 1911*

On 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1911, launched from hangars built on this spot, Waterbird became the first plane in what was then the British Empire to successfully take off and land on water.

The hydro-aeroplane, which was piloted by Herbert Stanley Adams, was the brainchild of Captain Edward Wakefield who owned Hill of Oaks at that time.



*Herbert Stanley Adams (seated) and Edward Wakefield in 1911*

The plane had been built by AV Roe & Co. in Manchester and had successfully flown from land but the early pioneers had difficulty designing a float which would enable the plane to travel at speed on water without dipping and would also allow a gentle landing. After much trial and error during the autumn of 1911, Wakefield's two-step design, which he subsequently patented, was finally successful.



*Hangars at Hill of Oaks*

Wakefield then set up the Lakes Flying Company, initially based at Hill of Oaks, to give the public the experience of flying from water. A second two-seater hydro-aeroplane, Waterhen, was built for this purpose.

There was much local opposition; Canon Rawnsley, Beatrix Potter and others felt that the peace, quiet and safety of Windermere would be ruined if noisy aeroplanes were allowed to use it.



*The Royal Naval Air Station*

The Navy, with the support of Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, recognised the strategic importance of hydro-aeroplanes and paid for Wakefield to carry out further trials.

Hill of Oaks became a seaplane school for the Royal Naval Air Service and more hangars were built along the shore. It became a Royal Naval Air Station in

1916 but this was disbanded in 1917. The officers' mess and other buildings remained on the site until it became a caravan park in the 1950s.

Waterbird's existence was short-lived. It was destroyed in March 1912 when the roof of the hangar at Cockshott Point, in which it was then housed, collapsed during a storm.

The Lakes Flying Company was revived as a charity in 2009 and has built a replica of Waterbird. This first flew in June 2022.



*Waterbird replica in 2022*