



Herne Bay Historical Records Society

Report of Meeting November 19th 2015

“History of the Royal Naval Air Station at Westgate 1914 – 1920”

James Brazier's talk on the History of the Royal Naval Air Station at Westgate 1914 – 1920 revealed some very interesting and revealing aspects of the air defence of this country during the first World War. He outlined the chronological development of the site from 28th June 1914 when the first acres of land at Westgate were purchased and the opening of the Sea Plane Base the very next day on 29th June 1914 to its final closure when all the buildings and land were sold off by public auction on 15th September 1920. His excellent illustrations comprising many contemporary photographs, postcards, newspaper reports and sketches showed the very basic designs of the early seaplanes which were being flown and included reports of the actions taken against the first German Zeppelin night raids of Margate and the East Coast from 1915 onwards. He explained that all personnel on the base were employees of the Royal Naval Air Service, the air arm of the Royal Navy, under the direction of the Admiralty's Air Department which existed formally from 1st July 1914 to 1st April 1918 when it was merged with the British Army's Royal Flying Corps to form a new service, the Royal Air Force.

It was obvious from the discussion and many questions from members following his talk that James had provided a very informative and interesting evening highlighting some hitherto fairly unknown aspects of WW1 warfare in the local area.