

ELTA –

The First Aviation Exhibition Amsterdam 1919

By Rob J M Mulder

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EVERY so often a book appears that refreshingly breaks away from the routine run of aircraft type profiles, wartime military memoirs and the like. One such is Rob Mulder's authoritative treatise on a long forgotten, yet nonetheless important, aspect of aviation history. Less than a year after the guns of World War One fell silent, Holland hosted a remarkable aviation event well ahead of its time - the First Aviation Exhibition. As well as providing a showcase for aircraft manufacturers to exhibit the advances in aircraft design and innovation brought about by the exigencies of the Great War, it also served to give a glimpse of the future prospects for civil aviation and afforded the public at large perhaps their first experience of the exciting possibilities of air travel. Rivalling the celebrated Paris Salon, and two

months before the establishment of KLM, the event was a great success, giving impetus to the rapid developments that would follow and attracting over half a million visitors, some 4,000 of whom took pleasure flights.

British participants formed one of the largest contingents attending, including such names as Airco, Avro, Handley-Page and Vickers. The better part of a century has now elapsed since ELTA first opened its doors and over time its significance has waned. Now for the first time, in the hands of a respected European airline historian and author, the full story of this remarkable event has been unveiled in meticulous detail. Through extensive and patient research, Rob has unearthed a wealth of hitherto lost material. Successive chapters provide a comprehensive overview of the prevailing European aviation scene, the concept, organisation and construction of the exhibition, details of all the many participants and exhibitors and an almost day-by-day narrative of



surrounding events and activities. Nor are the numerous pilots and personalities ignored, with profiles and pictures of many of those involved. The well-constructed text is copiously illustrated with a large selection of rare period photographs, brochure and advertisement artwork, while appendices include a pick of novel thumbnail pencil sketches and unusual images – MAURICE WICKSTEAD