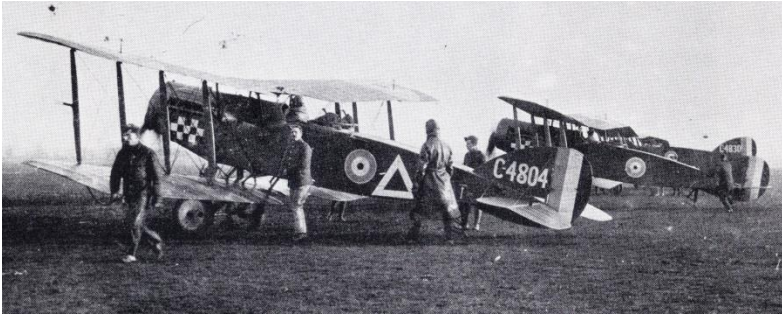


Lt William Smith Ely (US Air Service)



DoB: 18th November 1895 **Died:** 2nd January 1918 **Age:** 22

Buried: Wolvercote Cemetery with a Memorial at Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, New York.

Family:

Born in Rochester, New York to William Snr (died 1911) and Helen Smith Ely. His father & grandfather were both well known physicians (his grandfather a renowned Civil War surgeon and tuberculosis expert). William was expected to enter Harvard Medical School upon his graduation from college, but on the outbreak of war he abandoned his plans for the study of medicine. 1 half sibling, but lived with wider family members and several servants in NY.

Military Career:

Joined the Aviation Section of the USA Signal Corps in Boston in May 1917, being assigned to the Ground School of Military Aeronautics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to receive his preliminary training. William was permitted to continue his studies at Harvard and graduated in the class of 1917, in uniform. On July 19th he set sail for England arriving at Liverpool July 30th 1917. He was eventually sent to France to attend the Aviation H.Q, American Expeditionary Force, in Paris where he received his commission as 1st Lieutenant on 27th November 1917. He was then detailed to return to England to train as a Squadron Leader, stationed at Northolt and then at Port Meadow with 35 TS.

Accident:

Wytham. Canadian 2nd Lt John Reginald "Rex" Nickson was piloting Bristol Fighter C4830 (furthestmost aeroplane in the photo). John had invited American Lt William Smith Ely to be a passenger, probably for a joyride. The aircraft stalled at 300 ft while corkscrewing to land with the engine turned off, and nosedived, burying the engine 4ft into the ground. Nickson had recently qualified as a pilot and was awaiting orders for overseas service. Court of Inquiry recorded death through an "error of judgement" on Nickson's part, but with no blame attributable to him.