

Captain Edward Fraser Norris



DoB: 22nd November 1895

Died: 15th March 1918

Age: 22

Buried: Wolvercote Cemetery. (grave has his age as 23)

Family:

Edward was born in Bournemouth in 1895, the only son of Ernest (Lt Colonel in RFA) and Fanny Norris. 2 older siblings. He was awarded his private Royal Aero Club Aviators Certificate on 28th January 1914, just over 6 months before the start of WW1. Edward's engagement to a Miss Ileene Aste was announced in August 1916.

Military Career:

On 12th August 1914, just over a week after the war began, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on Probation, and confirmed in that rank in December 1914. He was posted to France on 15th March 1915 and promoted to Lieutenant on 24th April. On 16th June 1915 his plane suffered engine failure at 150ft and nosedived to the ground, injuring him for nearly 4 months. Promotion to Flight Commander (Temporary Captain) followed on 31st March 1916, and then promotion to Captain in June 1917. He served with 3 squadrons before being posted home as an instructor and was promoted to second in command of No 35 Training Squadron (TS) RFC based at Port Meadow.

Accident:

Wolvercote Common. Piloting Bristol Fighter C4647 he was practising looping at over 3,000 ft directly above Port Meadow when, on the third loop, the left wings folded and the plane plummeted to the ground. The impact on nearby Wolvercote Common, close to the surviving "Target" building, was so severe that the engine was buried more than 3 feet into the ground, and the plane exploded into flames. Edward was described by another officer cadet in a letter home written on the day of the crash as "one of the best pilots" and "the most popular member of our mess". No blame was attributed to the pilot and the cause was unclear.