

2nd Lt Joseph Packer



DoB: 9th December 1896

Died: 20th August 1918

Age: 21

Buried: Christchurch Burial Ground Swindon

Family:

Born in Islington to Joseph & Anne Packer who later moved to Swindon. 3 younger brothers. Father was born in Islington and his mother in Brize Norton. They married in the Witney district.

Military Career:

Enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps June, 1914, and transferred to the Royal Engineers 1915 attaining the rank of Corporal. Served in France and Belgium. Transferred to RFC to take a commission and attended 2nd School of Military Aeronautics in Oxford from 30th November 1917. Promoted to 2nd Lt on Probation on 24th January and posted to his first flying training squadron posting (10 TS) on 9th February. Confirmed 2nd Lt effective 1st April 1918. Joseph then transferred to Port Meadow (35 TS) 2nd April 1918 which merged with 71 TS in May to form 44 TDS. He was reported locally in Swindon as becoming a successful aviator, and gave “numerous exhibitions” of flying over Swindon, including “very fine displays of looping the loop etc”.

Accident:

Marston/Elsfield. A mid-air collision with Australian Lt Edward Westmoreland’s Bristol Fighter B826 while flying solo, practising “aerial fighting”, when one pilot lost sight of the other aircraft during a manoeuvre. Joseph’s aircraft caught fire and crashed into a cornfield, exploding upon impact. He was flying Bristol Fighter C759.

Lt Westmoreland’s aircraft’s wings folded on impact with the other aircraft, and he was then seen to jump to his death with his arms spread out.