

Frederick William Polehampton.

Lieutenant, Royal Flying Corps.



Lt. Frederick William Polehampton.

Frederick William Polehampton came from an eminent ecclesiastical family. His grandfather Edward Polehampton M.A. an Eton scholar and Fellow of King's College, Cambridge became Rector of Great Greenford, Middlesex and married Elizabeth Stedman daughter of Thomas Stedman, Vicar of St, Chad's, Shrewsbury. Of their nine children five of their sons also entered the ministry although Frederick's uncle, Henry Stedman Polehampton resigned the position of Rector of St. Algates, Oxford after 6 months because it was not compatible with his Fellowship of Pembroke College, Oxford. He subsequently volunteered for the Chaplaincy of the Residency of Lucknow, India where he died from cholera after being wounded at the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

Frederick's father, Edward Thomas William Polehampton M.A. (Pembroke College) Oxford also attended Eton College and in 1859 became the rector of Hartfield in Sussex. Ten years later he married Helena Cecilia Reilly and they had five children of which Frederick was the second of three sons. Born on the 14th of June 1873 he was baptised on the 6th July in the church of St. Mary's, Hartfield.

According to the Census of 1881 Frederick and his siblings were under the tutelage of a German Governess. In September 1886 Frederick enrolled as a student at St. Nicholas College, Lancing, Sussex described at the time as 'a Christian Foundation in the Anglican Tradition' and as 'a training school for the Universities'. He was a member of School House. In July 1891, his education at Lancing complete, he left the College with no sign of him following the family traditions of University or the Churchⁱ. Frederick thereafter presented himself as 'a gentleman of independent means'. The only record so far found indicating otherwise refers to him as an English Merchant when returning to Liverpool from New York on board the R.M.S Campania in September 1897ⁱⁱ.

From around 1893 his name appears from time to time in newspapers in the South of England in connection with his sporting interests. He competed in twelve hour cycling races at Herne Hill for Annerly and London Cycling Club and played football for teams in both Sussex and Surrey with reports indicating that he was a 'hard tackling defender'. By 1896 he owned a string of race horses competing at courses across the land. In 1902 his horse Miss Clifden II was entered in the Grand National but was listed as 'an also ran'



FWP - Ready for Flight.

When or where Frederick first met Kate Davie is not known. He visited Canada in 1897 and arrived there again in the September of 1899. On Monday 9th October 1899 in Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, British Columbia, he married Kate Eunice Davieⁱⁱⁱ the daughter of Dr. John Chapman Davie, a native of Wells, Somerset and regarded as one of Victoria's pioneer citizens^{iv}. Mr. & Mrs. Polehampton left later that day on the S.S. Oceanic for England. Frederick and Kate were not destined to have any children.

On their arrival from Canada the couple took up residence at Heyford Grange, Nether Heyford, Northamptonshire^v but by 1902 had relocated to a property called 'The Comedy' in Christian Malford, Chippenham, Wiltshire, now a Grade II listed building, where Frederick became the Honorary Secretary of the North Wiltshire Polo Club^{vi}. He participated in the annual club Gymkhana of that year winning both 'the pig sticking' competition and 'tandem' events on a horse named 'Comedy'.

In the years that followed his name became synonymous in the local and national press with any event involving horses, whether it be horse racing, polo, point to point, gymkhana or the local hunts.

In 1906 Frederick took the lease of a property, the Manor House, Burton Dassett, Warwickshire, owned by Richard Greville Verney, the 19th Baron Willoughby de Broke, the master of the Warwickshire Hunt^{vii}. Frederick subsequently joined the Hunt and was regarded by his peers as 'a cheery soul who will jump at anything that comes in the line^{viii}'. He also became a member of the Moreton Morrell Polo Club^{ix}.

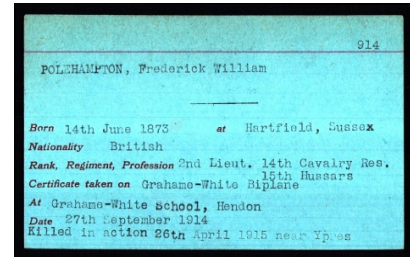
Together with a Mr. J.L. Scott, Frederick established a motor car dealership, Scott & Polehampton at 161, Picadilly, London but this was dissolved by mutual consent on the 31st January 1912^x.

What becomes apparent in the research of Frederick's life was his desire to push the boundaries of speed. From his early days of cycling to his horses and subsequently as to what he could achieve in a motor car. A desire, that would bring him at odds with the law on more than one occasion.

On Monday the 18th September 1910 he was summoned to appear at the Warwick police Court for driving a motor car along Longbridge Road in Warwick in a manner dangerous to the public^{xi}. Reports estimate that he was driving at 50 - 60 miles per hour^{xii} in a vehicle described as an engine with two seats. The vehicle braked and then spun three times with Frederick being thrown out. He insisted that this was caused by him trying to avoid a dog in the road. Angry witnesses to the speeding became more conciliatory when they learned about the survival of the dog. Frederick was nevertheless fined £10. During the trial it transpired that he had previous convictions between 1905 and 1909 for similar offences. He had then been found guilty and fined with what appears to be the statutory £10 and in addition, on one occasion, to further sum of ten shillings and sixpence for his failure to produce his licence.

The lease on the Burton Dassett property although for 21 years was reviewable 7 years into the term. It could be assumed therefore that it was at this point, around 1912, that the Polehamptons transferred their residence to Walton Wood House on the outskirts of the Walton Hall Estate near Stratford upon Avon. In May of that year he was elected as a Vice President of Kineton Working Men's Constitutional Club^{xiii}. The name of the club bore little relation to the number of members of the gentry whose names appeared on the club's committee.

The month following the outbreak of the war in August 1914 Frederick was granted the temporary rank of Second Lieutenant in the 15th Hussars, part of the 14th Cavalry Reserve^{xiv}. He had been taking flying instruction in a Graham White Biplane at the Graham White Flying School, Hendon and on the 24th September received his Aviators certificate No914^{xv}.



Flying Certificate No 914

On New Year's Day 1915 Frederick's rank was upgraded to Second Lieutenant and he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, Special Reserve^{xvi}. On that same day No. 8 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps, to which Frederick would be posted, was formed at Brooklands and later transferred to Gosport. This squadron was to be the first to be equipped with the same aircraft – the Be 2c.

In the middle of April the squadron took off for reconnaissance duties in France, although it was not a particularly successful transfer. Of the twelve aircraft that took off from Gosport only eight arrived in France. Before leaving England three had either crashed or had been wrecked and one being forced to land for repairs. On the 24th Frederick received his promotion to lieutenant^{xvii} and by the following day the whole squadron had assembled at St. Omer.

The actual circumstances of Frederick's death are unknown but the second battle of Ypres was into its fifth day when on the 26th April 1915 near to that town it is recorded that he had been 'killed in action'^{xviii}. At her home in Walton, Warwickshire his wife received a telegram dated the 28th April which read: *Deeply regret to inform you that 2nd Lt. F.W.Polehampton, Royal Flying Corps was killed in action on 26th April – no further details. Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.*

Frederick Willam Polehampton was buried in the Longuenese (St. Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, situated 3 km from St. Omer in the Pas de Calais. (Grave 1. A .89)

Despite the short period spent in France, Frederick would still have been entitled to receive the 1914-1915 Star, the British War and Victory medals. Records indicate however, possibly because they were not requested by his wife, that they were never presented^{xix}.



A Be 2c Aircraft- (Duxford Imperial War Museum.)

Frederick is commemorated on the War memorials of Hartfield, Sussex and in the Warwickshire hamlet of Walton D'Eivile. His name also appears on the Roll of Honour located in the Walton Church of St. James.

On the 22nd September 1915 an auction of furniture etc. was held by Locke & Son at Walton Wood House announcing that Frederick's widow Kate would be leaving the district.

Following her husband's death she remained in England. Apart from visits, on a number of occasions to her sister in Phoenix, Arizona she moved between various fashionable addresses in London and some of her summers were spent at a property in Fortfield Terrace in Sidmouth, Devon. She died in the town's cottage hospital on the 23rd November 1963.

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ⁱ Lancing College.

ⁱⁱ Incoming Passenger Lists – National Archives.

ⁱⁱⁱ Victoria Daily Colonist – Wed 11th Oct. 1899- www. British colonist.ca*- British Columbia Marriage Index.

^{iv} A History of British Columbia by R. Edward Goswell.

^v Census 1901.

^{vi} Western Daily Press 29/8/1902.

^{vii} Lease from Lord Willoughby de Brooke to F.W.Polehampton 19/9/1906(Shakespeare Centre DR951/11/2).

^{viii} Leamington Spa Courier 25/2/1910.

^{ix} Polo in Britain, a History by Horrace A Laffaye.

^x London Gazette 6/9/1912.

^{xi} Leamington Spa Courier 23/9/1910

^{xii} The estimate of the speed was judged by a witness of the incident who counted the number of seconds it took the car to travel between two points and then subsequently measuring that distance. Calculation would then, most probably not very accurately, give the estimated speed. This was a method used by the Police Force at the time.

^{xiii} Leamington Spa Courier. 10/5/1912.

^{xiv} London Gazette 16/9/1914.

^{xv} Flight Magazine 9/10/1914.

^{xvi} London Gazette 1/2/1915 and 10/2/1915.

^{xvii} London Gazette 14/5/1915

^{xviii} There are some accounts that suggest the Frederick's death was as the result of an accident. Trevor Henshaw's 'The sky., their battlefield'. does not mention Frederick. He is listed as 'Killed in Action in Captain G.L.Campbell's Royal Flying Corps (Military Wing) casualties and honours during the war of 1914-1918. Lancing College war memorial lists him as killed in an accident at St.Omer while flying in BE2c no 1758 (Great War Forum).

As his military record states 'Killed in Action' I have assumed therefore that this is the case.(National Archives F.W.Polehampton WO339/9981)

^{xix} Medal card.