

ALBERT ERNEST PARKS



Photograph of Albert Parks courtesy of Mrs Rose Savage, his niece.

Albert Ernest Parks was born on the 18th November 1897 in Clapham, Surrey. He was the eldest son of Alfred Edward Parks and Rose Annie Parks née Harper. A second son Raymond Stephen was born in Plaistow, Essex on the 19th November 1903 and a third son Geoffrey Harper in Wanstead on 23rd March 1914. Geoffrey was baptised in Wanstead Congregational Church on 13th September 1914 by the Revd John Jermyn.

His father Alfred Parks was born in 1874 on the Isle of Dogs, West Ham, Essex. At age 22, he married Rose Annie Harper in 1896 at St Olaves Church, Southwark. In 1891, The Harper family lived at 69 Harold Road, Plaistow, West Ham in Essex.

Rose Annie Harper, Albert's mother was born in 1873 in Hull, Yorkshire. Rose Annie was the daughter of William Crow Harper and Mary Harper. William C Harper, like his father Henry before him, worked for H.M. Customs, first in Yorkshire and then in London.

In 1901, Alfred and Rose Annie Parks and their four year old son Albert Ernest were living at 46, Churlston Avenue, West Ham. Alfred was working as a Commercial Traveller. At the time of the 1901 Census they had a live-in domestic servant, 15 year old Kate Tarby, and a lodger, 23 year old Ernest A. Harper, Rose Annie's younger brother who had come to live in London and was working as a commercial clerk.

In 1911, the Parks family were living at 52, Redbridge Lane, Wanstead, S.E. Essex. Albert was 14 years old and Raymond was 7. The family were able to afford an 18 year old live-in domestic servant called Minnie Bush who was eighteen years old.

In 1901 and 1911, Alfred was a Commercial Traveller specialising in selling Art Needlework.

From 7th November 1913, 16 year old Albert was working as a Warehouseman at Stonards House in Paternoster Square, City of London. In March 1914, his younger brother Geoffrey Harper Parks was born at their home in Wanstead.

Albert joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1915. On 20th December 1916, he was attached to the 2nd School of Aeronautics. In 1916, the Royal Flying Corps Machine Gun School (a unit formed in September 1915) at Hythe, Kent was renamed the School of Aerial Gunnery. Albert joined the School of Aerial Gunnery on the 1st March 1917 where he became an instructor training flight crew to use the Lewis Gun.

On the 21st February 1917, Albert was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant (on probation), which was announced in the London Gazette on 8th March 1917.

On the 9th August 1917, Albert was attached to the 39th Training Squadron, 47 Wing of the Home Defence Group. The H.D.G. was responsible not only for training air and ground crews and preparing squadrons for deployment in France but also to provide squadrons for Home Defence, countering the German Zeppelin and later the Gotha Raids.

Unfortunately, from 16th March 1917 to the 29th December 1917, Albert was declared unfit for service and grounded. The National Archive service records are unclear but it does appear from Medical Board Records that he was suffering from recurrent 'tonsillitis with attendant fevers and agues.' Albert was advised to cut down on cigarette smoking and told to smoke a pipe.

On the 29th January 1918 Albert was deemed fit enough for 'general staff whilst under instruction as an observer.' ([National Archives ref AIR 76/389/66](#)) Albert remained with his unit (6th Brigade 39th Training Squadron 47 Wing) until 20th March 1918.

On the 6th November 1917, 191 Depot Squadron was formed at Marham Aerodrome and on 21st December it became the 191 (Night) Training Squadron. They were flying the Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2b's and F.E.2d's. In July 1918 they moved to Bury at Upwood Aerodrome near Huntingdon and Albert was attached to this unit as an Instructor.

The Training Squadrons were called upon to supply home defence aircraft and aircrew for the duration of the war. Night Flying and Defence Missions were often flown by instructors such as Albert

Parks, often in aircraft deemed worn out and too obsolete for front-line service. However the pilots selected as instructors were often the most experienced in the Royal Flying Corps having proven their ability in war flying at home and in France. Often though, the pilots chosen as instructors were men taking a break from active service for reasons of exhaustion, breakdown or ill-health.

On 3rd June 1918 Albert married Violet Adelaide Cullingford, the daughter of John Garrard and Rosa Ellen Cullingford née Cowley. In 1911 Violet was employed as a milliner's assistant and living with her parents at 36, Northcote Road in Walthamstow. In 1911, Violet's father was working as a house decorator. The marriage certificate shows that Albert was stationed at R.F.C. Melton Mowbray at this time.

In 1918 Violet's father, John Cullingford was employed as an Estate Agent and the family were living at 30, Pretoria Road, Leytonstone. Violet and Albert were just 21 years old when they married at St John's Church in Leytonstone. They had been married for just three months when Albert was killed in a tragic flying accident at Upwood Aerodrome on September 7th 1918 at 3pm, whilst he was on a short training flight, instructing 2nd Lieutenant Adam Howie Thompson.

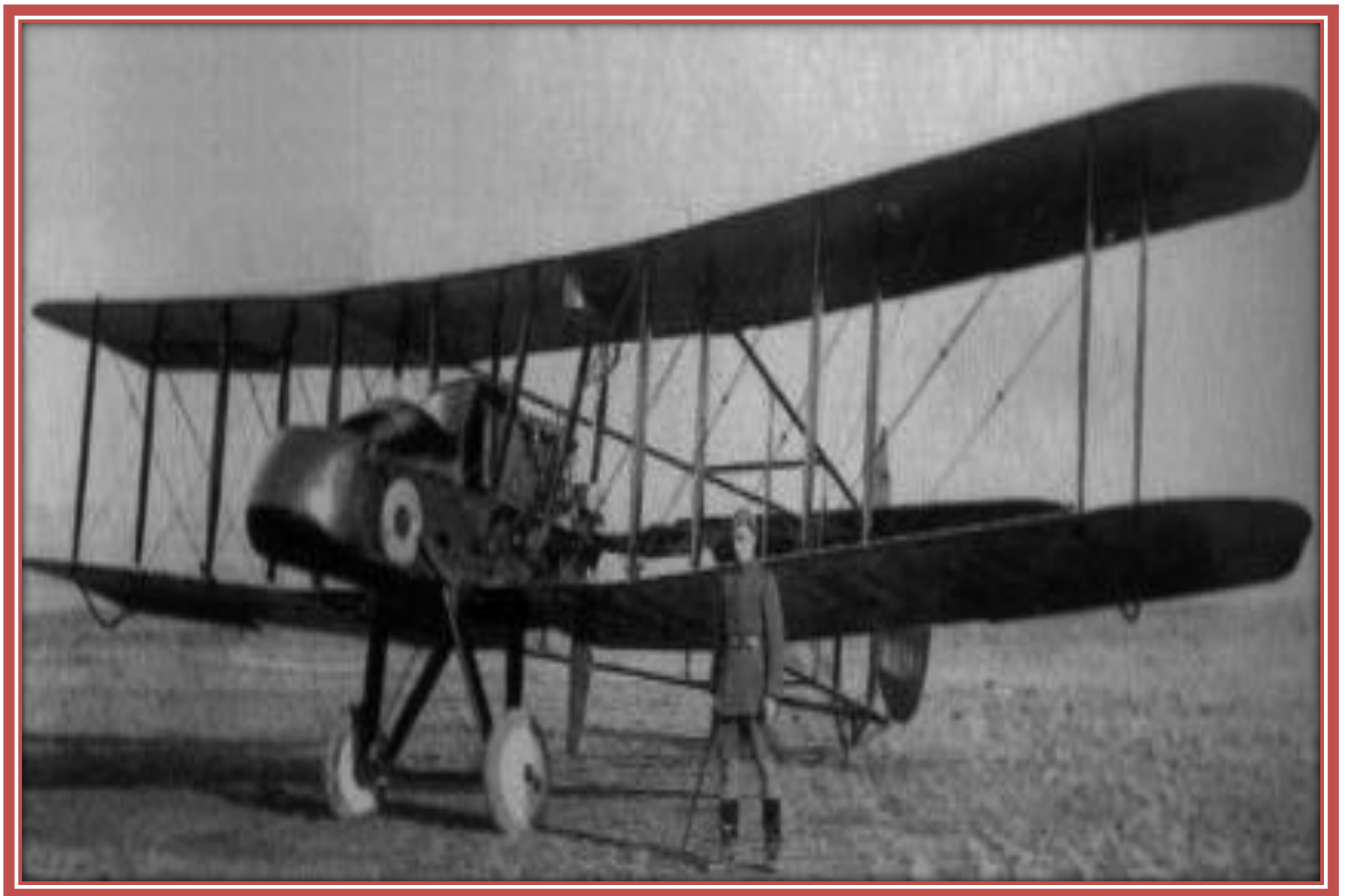


Albert Ernest Parks who is wearing the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps.

Photo courtesy of Mrs Rose Savage.

They were flying the two seater, F.E.2b aircraft, serial no D9753 which crashed soon after take-off. The F.E.2b was a three bay pusher

aeroplane and was fitted with a 120hp Beardmore Engine. Some of the later F.E.2b's were painted black and used for night flying.



The F.E.2b Aircraft

The inquest into the cause of the accident concluded the following,

“The cause of the accident was due to the machine stalling which developed into a spinning nose dive, thus causing the machine to crash to the ground killing both occupants.”



2nd Lieutenant Adam Howie Thompson.

(Photo courtesy of Sean Edwards of Upwood Aerodrome Historical Society and the Thompson/Withe Family)

Adam Howie Thompson born in 1892 was the son of Mr A.H. and Isabella Thompson, of Seaview, Boddam, Aberdeenshire. Adam served with the 4th Battalion Gordon Highlanders from 14th

November 1914 and became a commissioned officer from 27th March 1918. He was granted a commission in the newly formed Royal Air Force and on 3rd August 1918 was posted to the '191 Night Training Squadron'

Adam married Miss Mary Stewart Young on 30th April 1918 and the couple lived in Church Street, Antrim, Co. Antrim. Adam was 26 years old when he died and his newly pregnant wife gave birth to a daughter Adeline Howie Thompson (1919-1884) in June the following year. Adam's death was a second tragedy for his family as in 1912 his brother Alexander Morrison Thompson was a passenger on the Titanic. His body was not recovered.

Flying aircraft in World War 1 was a shockingly dangerous profession. Of the 14, 000 airmen killed in that war, well over half lost their lives in training.

Below, Albert and Adam rest side by side in Upwood Cemetery



Upwood village grave yard

Albert had written a will and probate was administered and granted on 14th February 1920 in London. Albert left his widow Violet Adelaide Parks effects amounting to the sum of £127 5s 3p.

Violet went on to marry Victor Edward Watson born in 1900, the son of Robert and Elizabeth Watson of 46, Addison Road, Wanstead, in the summer of 1920. Violet died on 30th January 1971 aged 74 at Honey Lane Hospital, Waltham Abbey. Albert's mother Rose Annie Parks died on the 11th September 1937. His father Alfred Edward Parks died on the 7th May 1957 in Warneford Hospital, Leamington Spa. He had been living nearby at the home of his youngest son, the Reverend Geoffrey Harper Parks of The Parsonage, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. Alfred Parks left effects of £15,374 10s to his two surviving sons.

Albert Parks earned the War and Victory Medals. He is commemorated on the Great War Memorial inside Wanstead United Reformed Church; on the War Memorial in Wanstead High Street London E11; on the War Memorial in St Peter's Upwood and on a granite Memorial Stone at RAF Upwood.



The Parks Family

The family story was kindly written and provided for the 'Our 15' Project by Mrs Rose Savage, daughter of Raymond Parks and the niece of Albert Parks. Rose has always found it very strange that Albert was not mentioned very much within the family and therefore she knows very little about him. She writes that it was almost as though Albert, the cherished eldest son was 'gone and forgotten.' One can only speculate that the family found his life and untimely death just far too painful to talk about.

"My grandparents were Rose Annie and Alfred Edward Parks. Albert was the eldest of their three sons, some eight years older than my father, Raymond Stephen Parks, and eighteen years older than the youngest son, Geoffrey Harper Parks. My grandfather was a travelling salesman, but in what goods I have no idea. Later he became a director of several companies and used to come and stay with us in Buckhurst Hill when he had board meetings.

I am not sure when they moved to Wanstead, but I do remember my father telling me that they lived in Redbridge Lane. I believe they later moved to somewhere near Arnos Grove in North London. Eventually they moved to Loughton and my grandfather lived there when I was a very small child during the war. My grandmother had died in 1937 and my grandfather died in the late 1950's.

My grandmother was a sculptress - unfortunately not professional - but the work she did was amazing and there are pieces of her work scattered among the family.

My father Raymond became deaf at the age of four through having Scarlet Fever. However, he attended Leyton High School for Boys and

was very well educated, as was my uncle Geoffrey when he was old enough for school. Dad then was sent to South Africa to stay with relatives out there and was there for six years, from 1924 to 1929. When he came home what he wanted to do most was to become a silversmith - following his mother's artistic trait - but because he was deaf nobody would apprentice him - in the 1930's "deaf was daft! " So he attended weekly classes at the Sir John Cass Institute in London and became a very able silversmith with his own hallmark, and attended those classes for over 40 years. During the War, as he was not able to go into the Forces, he worked at a factory in Loughton, and when my mother took me to stay with my grandparents (her parents) in Rutland, he stayed at home and spent the evenings decorating the house and doing embroidery as well as his silver-smithing.

Between 1930 and the outbreak of war in 1939, Dad worked for the Clarks factory; they made Anchor embroidery silks, cottons and the linen with transfers on ready for embroidery. There he met my mother and they were married in 1936. When war came Clarks had to close down as it was a luxury industry and I believe the workers were told to take what they wanted. I know that we had enough embroidery silks, tray cloths and table cloths ready to embroider for me to work on for many years.

My Uncle Geoffrey became a Church of England priest and during the war was an Army Chaplain. After the war he had a living at Flitcham, on the Sandringham Estate, and then went to Stoneleigh in Warwickshire where he stayed until he retired. He was made Canon of Coventry Cathedral. When he retired, he and his wife moved to Chichester where he spent much time working in the Cathedral, setting up the Treasury and many other tasks.

My father Raymond died in 1990, aged nearly 87, and Uncle Geoffrey died in 1991 aged 77. I was the only child of my parents, but Uncle Geoffrey and Auntie Pat had two daughters, Penelope and Robina Parks.

I hope this brief outline of my family will help although I know so little about Albert. The only thing is that he had been married for only three months when he was killed, to a lady named Violet. I was very surprised that she was not mentioned anywhere on any of the Memorials, but perhaps that was her wish. Our family kept in contact with her for many years and she re-married and had a family of her own. I am afraid that I don't have any photographs with Albert in. All the photos I have are of the 1930's when my father Raymond and Uncle Geoffrey were grown men."

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Margaretha Pollitt Brown for Wanstead United Reformed Church.