

## Charles HOMEWOOD

**REGIMENT:** Royal Air Force  
**BATTALION/UNIT:** 207 Training Depot Station  
**RANK:** Second Lieutenant  
**DIED:** 8 July 1918  
**AGE AT DEATH:** 23 (headstone states 24)  
**MEMORIAL/CEMETERY:** South East corner of St Mary's Church, Frittenden

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Charles Homewood was the 7<sup>th</sup> of 12 children of Edward and Julia Homewood. He had emigrated to America in 1912 with his sister Alice Maud, and at the outbreak of war he was in Canada where he joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Contingent in Victoria with his elder brother Edward. After training they crossed Canada by train to Halifax, then on troopship to Ireland and eventually arrived at Shorncliffe Barracks, Folkestone.

Charles and Edward took part in the Battle of Festubert in May 1915. Edward was badly wounded and was sent back to England for treatment, but was discharged as unfit for service and was back in Canada in early 1916. Charles had a slight leg injury in June 1915 and then whilst on leave in February 1916 he fell off his bike returning from Headcorn station and injured his knee. He was in a convalescent camp at Selling and wasn't declared fit for active service until May 1916. He was transferred to the Canadian Ordnance Camp at Ashford and was able to stay with his aunt Emilene in Ashford and so was able to get home almost every weekend for the next 18 months.

In July 1917 one of his letters revealed that "I am glad to be able to stay near home so long but I often feel that I should be out doing more. My ambition is to get into the Flying Corps and if I have to move from here I shall certainly try for that." In December 1917 that ambition was realised and he was accepted into the Royal Naval Air Service, starting at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. He passed his exams in March 1918 and then moved to the flying school at Chingford.

*"Flying I think is glorious – there is no sport half so nice. It is just great, sailing over the trees and housetops and the view of the country is simply ripping. I am looking forward to the time when I shall be able to pilot a machine myself."*

By June 1918 he was flying solo

*"I am still getting along very well flying, have now been up alone about three hours, I hope to fly home one day as I told you ... I climbed through the clouds to 7,000ft, the clouds below looked very pretty, just like mountains of white feathers if you can imagine it."*

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1918 Charles was killed in a flying accident at Fairlop airfield. The family were first notified by telegram of the accident, then a few hours later, another came with news of his death. His mother and brother, Leonard, went to the inquest at Ilford Town Hall. The inquest report from the Ilford Guardian of 19 July quotes a Captain Reginald Hearn, of the RAMC, who was stationed at the same aerodrome. Captain

Hearn testified that at the time of the accident he was in his car passing the aerodrome when he "saw the deceased just commencing a flight. When at a height of about 400 feet he turned to the left in a flat turn instead of banking; the effect of this would have been for the machine to lose speed. When the flying speed was lost the machine dipped and went into a flat spin which became a spinning nose dive. With the engine still running that would make matters worse and in a few seconds the machine crashed to the ground about 50 yards away from the witness." Captain Hearn immediately went to the assistance and found Second Lieutenant Homewood pinned under the wreckage of his plane. With the help of others, Hearn transferred the semi-conscious Homewood to the sick ward of the aerodrome and he was later moved to the Ilford Emergency Hospital where he died a few hours later without regaining consciousness. He had suffered severe abdominal injuries, as well as breaking both legs and his right arm.



The inquest jury returned a verdict of accidental death and his body was taken by the RAF to Bubhurst Farm with a guard of honour, his brother Willie crying all the way down the lane. The same afternoon the funeral was held at St Mary's, the church was full of family and friends. Charles Homewood was buried under the yew tree in the churchyard by the school on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 1918, which would have been his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday.