

THE EXCEPTIONAL WWI PILOTS M.C., A.F.C. AND POST WAR O.B.E. MEDALS, MILITARIA AND DOCUMENTS GROUP TO A WING COMMANDER, ROYAL AIR FORCE, WHO AFTER SERVICES IN THE TRENCHES AS AN NCO IN THE 1/8TH (TERRITORIAL) BATTALION, WORCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT, BECAME A PILOT IN THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS, EARNING THE MILITARY CROSS FOR GALLANTRY IN 1917 AS A 'BIG AK' PILOT OF 35TH SQUADRON. A "GALLANT AND DETERMINED PILOT" HE WAS FURTHER AWARDED THE AIR FORCE CROSS IN 1918 FOR HIS SERVICE AT HOME ESTABLISHMENT. FROM 1919 AS A PIONEER OF CIVIL AVIATION WITH HANDLEY PAGE, HE PILOTED THE FIRST TRANS-EUROPEAN FLIGHT BY A COMMERCIAL AEROPLANE IN 1919. RECALLED TO SERVICE DURING THE SECOND WAR, HE INITIALLY SERVED WITH NO 3 MILITARY AND AIR MISSION OR 'PHANTOM', REMAINING IN EUROPE UNTIL THE FALL OF FRANCE AND SUBSEQUENTLY AS WING COMMANDER AND AIR MINISTRY LIAISON OFFICER WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE 1943 'WINGS FOR VICTORY' CAMPAIGN. A FIRST-CLASS CRICKETER HE REPRESENTED WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB BETWEEN 1919 AND 1931 AND IN LATER YEARS BECAME PRESIDENT OF THE CLUB. HE WAS AWARDED THE O.B.E. FOR HIS SERVICE AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION.



THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE OFFICER'S SILVER GILT BADGE, CIVIL DIVISION, MILITARY CROSS G.V.R., REVERSE ENGRAVED 'CAPT. W.H.N. SHAKESPEARE. R.F.C. 1917.'. SUSPENSION BAR ADDITIONALLY ENGRAVED 'CAPT. W.H.N.SHAKESPEARE. R.F.C.', AIR FORCE CROSS G.V.R., 1914-15 STAR '2360 CPL. W.G.N. SHAKESPEARE. WORC. R.', BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS 'CAPT. W.H.N.

SHAKESPEARE. R.A.F.', 1939-1945 STAR, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS. Swing mounted as originally worn

O.B.E. *London Gazette* 31 May 1968

“Wing Commander William Harold Nelson Shakespeare, MC, AFC, deputy chairman, Royal Air Forces Association.”

M.C. *London Gazette* 4 February 1918

"T./Capt. William Harold Nelson Shakespeare, RFC, was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He carried out a most successful contact patrol in very bad weather at a height of 400ft and brought back very valuable information. Later, he carried out another successful contact patrol at low altitude, his machine being subjected to intense rifle and machine-gun fire. He is a gallant and determined pilot and has set a fine example to his squadron."

A.F.C. *London Gazette* 29 October 1918

Wing Commander William Harold Nelson Shakespeare was born in Worcester on 24 August 1893 and was educated at the Royal Grammar School. Proficient in French and German, he was employed by Joseph Leete & Sons Ltd as a foreign correspondent from 1913 but on the outbreak of the Great War, he enlisted in the 1/8th Territorial Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, serving in France from 1 April 1915. As part of 144th Brigade, 48th Division, the 1/8th. The battalion was in action in the trenches on the Western Front and during the Somme offensive, 1 July 1916, suffering heavy casualties during the attack on Quadrilateral. Shakespeare transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, receiving his commission as Temp 2nd Lieutenant (Probationary) on 27 July 1916, training as a pilot at Reading and 25 R.S. before joining the newly formed 59 Squadron on 11 September 1916.



Transferring to 35 Squadron on 7 November 1916, this squadron mobilised to France on 18 January 1917. Equipped with F.K.8 (the "Big Ack"), this aircraft proved to be effective and dependable, being used for reconnaissance, artillery spotting, ground-attack, contact-patrol and day and night bombing.

Initially serving with Headquarters R.F.C. (Attached to the Cavalry Corps), by 1 July 1917, they formed part of 12th (Corps) Wing, 3rd Brigade, R.F.C. again attached to the Cavalry Corps.

Shakespeare's papers note he was admitted to hospital on 7 April 1917; reason unknown and he was promoted Temp Captain and Flight Commander on 1 October 1917 (served as such from 14 September). On 23 November 1917, whilst flying a reconnaissance mission, Shakespeare's observer, 2/Lieut Perkins, was severely wounded (GSW legs) and on 1 December 1917, during an offensive patrol, his observer; 2/Lieut Shaw was wounded in the shoulder by machine gun fire. A very fine and detailed website on 35 Squadron can be found here:

<https://35squadron.wordpress.com/>

Shakespeare transferred to Home Establishment on 4 December 1917 and to Headquarters ET Bde on 5 January 1918. Two days later he joined 69 Training Squadron. It seems Shakespeare remained with 69 Training Squadron for the duration of the war and it would likely have been for his services at this unit or some form of testing (with Handley Page?) that he was awarded the A.F.C. He transferred to the unemployed list on 4 May 1919 but listed as 'Independent' serving with Handley Page Aircraft Works at Cricklewood who at who were exploring the idea of converting their famed bombers, into postal and passenger aircraft.



In early 1919, piloting a converted Handley Page, he started flying the run between Didsbury to Glasgow dropping copies of the Daily Mail by parachute to newsagents in Carlise, Edinburgh and Glasgow. However he was involved in crash in May 1919, when after a forced landing in a field and after repairs were made, he crashed on take-off and the aircraft was wrecked. Of the crew, Miss Sylvia Boyden had several front teeth knocked out and both her and Captain Shakespeare spent several days in hospital.

Between 1 August and 14 September 1919, Captain Shakespeare attended the the Eerste Luchtverkeer Tentoonstelling Amsterdam - ELTA (First Amsterdam Air Show - ELTA). During this event, in which many well-known Wartime pilots for different nations attended, around 100 planes were present, and it was attended by over 500,000 people. Shakespeare flew his Handley Page 0/7:

<https://it-m-wikipedia>

org.translate.google/wiki/Eerste_Luchtverkeer_Tentoonstelling_Amsterdam?_x_tr_sl=it&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc



In October 1919, piloting a modified Handley Page 00/400, he undertook the first trans-European flight by a commercial aeroplane to Athens. Much was made of this flight, and it was widely reported in both Britain and Greece. Included in this group are official instructions from Handley Page to Shakespeare regarding the route, stop offs for petrol etc. Additionally a 16 page report by him regarding the flight, entitled '*across Europe by air*'.

Shakespeare also flew the London- Brussels route. He was restored to the active list as a Flight Lieutenant, 13 April 1921, listed as 1 Group 12 April 1921 and Pilot, Handley Page, B.F.A.A. but was again transferred to the unemployed list on 4 June 1921, continuing to work with Handley Page.

He married in 1925 and the same year left aviation to pursue business opportunities and Cricket, which was and would continue to be a big part of his life. He took part in numerous First-Class matches for Worcestershire County Cricket Club between 1919 and 1931 and in later years became President of the club. A Conservative, he was elected as an Edgware member of Hendon Council in 1931.

THE SECOND WAR AND BEYOND

With war looming, on 23 January 1939, Shakespeare was granted the Honorary rank of Flight Lieutenant and then Honorary Wing Commander in April that year but with the outbreak of the Second War, he was restored to service. Granted the rank of Pilot Officer (on probation), he served in the RAF section of No.3 Military and Air Mission from November 1939. This unit originated in 1939 as No 3 British Air Mission (an RAF unit). Its task was to liaise with the Belgian General Staff, to pin-point British and Belgian forward positions so that allied aircraft would not attack them in error. The unit was commanded by an RAF officer, with an army officer joining in November 1939 as military observer. Following the attachment of an army contingent, the unit was re-designated No 3 Military and Air Mission. This unit was initially code-named 'Phantom', but this later became part of the official designation. After the evacuation from Dunkirk the unit was re-established in England as No 1 GHQ Reconnaissance Unit.

It is not clear how long Shakespeare served with No.3 Military and Air Mission, but presumably until the Fall of France. Promoted Squadron Leader 12 November 1940 and Wing Commander 1 September 1942. After service in France, Wing Commander Shakespeare served as an Air Ministry Liaison Officer. His obituary notes he served in Canada for a period but in newspaper reports from 1943, he is also noted as being the inspiration behind the 'Wings for Victory' campaign; a campaign in which City's Towns and Villages around the country, raised funds for fighters and bombers. The idea being that each town would be given the logbooks for the aircraft that purchased after the War. According to the Weekley Dispatch, 4 March 1945:

" This vast task was the inspiration of Wing Commander Shakespeare when Air Liaison Officer attached to the National Savings Committee. It is being carried out by a little known branch of the Air Ministry – The Historical Section- which is making a comprehensive survey of the air war for future generations.."

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/UK0043>



Post War, Wing Commander Shakespeare was kept busy in public services. He served as President of the Edgware Branch of the British Legion, Chairman of the Edgware and Cambridge branches of the Royal Air Force Association and member of the Executive Committee Royal Air Force Association and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. He was presented with the Golden Key by the Mayor of Worcestershire. Wing Commander Shakespeare died on 10 July 1976, aged 83.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Harold_Nelson_Shakespeare

PILOT WITH HANDLEY PAGE A PIONEER OF CIVIL AVIATION

As noted previously, soon after the end of the War, Captain Shakespeare joined Handley Page Aircraft Works and was a pioneer pilot of early postal and passenger aviation service, undertaking the first trans-European flight by a commercial aeroplane. The following are various 1919 quotes regarding

his flights, both postal and passenger, from Flight Magazine, Shakespeare himself and other published sources:

“Meanwhile Captain W. Shakespeare had begun flying newspapers from Didsbury to Glasgow in F5414 on 3 May, and on the 12th was returning to Didsbury with Major Orde-Lees and Sylvia Boyden, together with his fitter Bill Crisp and rigger George Marchmont, when he had to make a forced landing with engine trouble at Harker, a few miles north of Carlisle. The trouble was soon rectified but the aircraft crashed in attempting to take off from the small field in which it had landed and was considerably damaged; Orde Lees, Marchmont and Crisp in the rear fuselage were only shaken, but the two in front had to spend a few days in Carlisle hospital, Miss Boyden having several front teeth knocked out. Only the rear fuselage and tail unit of F5414 was found to be worth salvaging for return to Cricklewood, but this was sufficient to preserve the legal identity of the rebuilt airframe which emerged two months later, having been converted to the full O/7 standard in the process; it was, in fact, the only previously flown O/400 to be so converted, its original C of A having lapsed at the end of May and being replaced by a new one, No. 165, dated 14 August, 1919.”

Passenger flight to Europe:

“A proving flight of the first such conversion, marked G-5417, was made by Captain Shakespeare with several passengers from Hounslow to Brussels and Amsterdam on 21 August; he returned on the 25th, when he became the first man to have breakfasted in Amsterdam, lunched in Brussels and dined in London all in one day.”

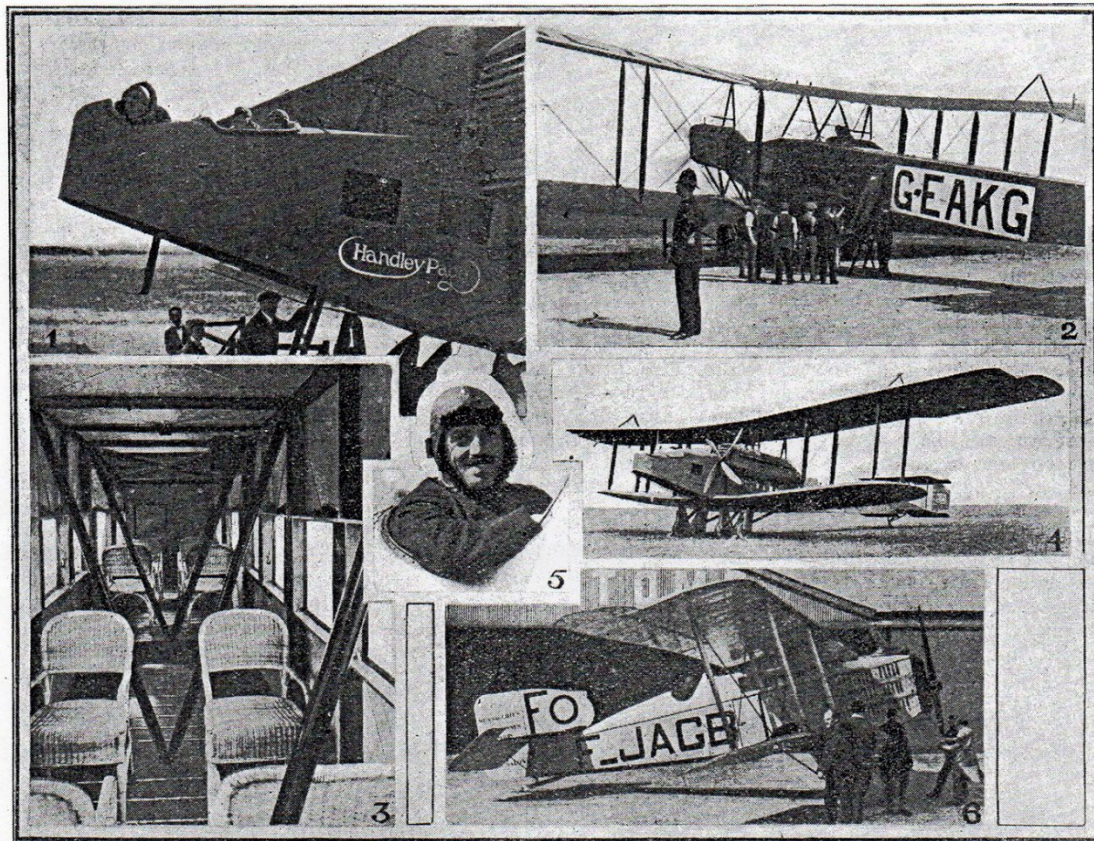


The historic first civilian trans-Europe flight:

“An enthusiastic reception had been given to Captain Shakespeare, who flew G-EAAW to Athens on 30 October to take part in an exhibition of British industrial products; his route was Paris-Lyons-

Pisa-Rome-Benevento-Taranto and on 1 November he took up the King of Greece for a flight at Tatoi near Athens."

In "Flight" (December 4, 1919) Shakespeare posted from Athens "I have the pleasure to report the successful completion of the first civilian trans-Europe flight. I arrived at Athens after the most trying and unpleasant stage of the journey from London. Taking advantage of what seemed to be good weather at Valona, I left in the early morning and made quite good time under good conditions to Prevesa.



"Flight" Copyright
LONDON-PARIS AND LONDON-BRUSSELS: The Handley Page firm are now running two continental air services, one to Paris and one to Brussels. In connection with the Paris service Breguet biplanes now alternate with the Handley Pages, the British machines leaving London on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the French machines on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The Paris-London service is in the reverse order. Our photographs show: (1) Passengers in the nose of the Handley Page which opened the London-Brussels air service on Wednesday of last week, piloted by Capt. Shakespeare. (2) Passengers entering the Handley Page. (3) The interior of the Handley Page, which carries 10 passengers and 500 lbs. of general freight. (4) The Handley Page biplane, two Rolls-Royce engines, used on the London-Paris and London-Brussels routes. (5) M. Patin, the pilot of one of the Breguet biplanes. (6) One of the Breguet biplanes alternating with the Handley Pages on the London-Paris service.

"Shortly afterwards I landed at Tatoi, having done the journey from Valona in 4 and a half hours. This, I was afterwards told, was a record time. The people - Greek and English flying officers - were very surprised to see us as the weather had been practically impossible all day; in fact five minutes before we landed an RAF HP machine, securely picketed, had been picked up by the wind and been blown completely on its back, being a nasty mess of wreckage which was spread out in front of us. Needless to say after the buffeting I had received, I was greatly relieved to make our final landing; in fact we were all pleased with ourselves at the successful completion of this long journey, although it had taken longer than we expected. This fact was due to conditions over which neither I nor the mechanics had any control. Altogether, the machine had been out in six whole days' rain. The engines, with the attention they received stood very well

"On the day fixed for the inspection by HM King of Greece the Press turned up in copious numbers. We initiated them into the mysteries of the HP and trans-Europe flight.

"I did two flights of Press people over Athens, and all went home very pleased with the machine, the new 'sensation' and themselves. On these trips we did some pamphlet dropping over the city.

"Saturday, November 1, was a memorable day, for HM King of Greece turned up and inspected the machine. He was greatly impressed, and finally I persuaded him to come up for a flight. Since that occasion His Majesty has had two further flights, the last trip being from Athens to Corinth".



WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB AND IMRAN KHAN

A keen and talented cricketer and sportsman, Shakespeare made his First-Class debut against Warwickshire at Edgbaston in 1919 and would play in a further 25 First-Class matches for Worcestershire between 1919 and 1931. He continued to play in Second XI matches after this date up until 1949 and as Honorary Secretary of the RAF Cricket Association, was instrumental in arranging (and playing in) inter Service and International matches during the Second War.

In 1971, as chairman of Worcestershire County Cricket Club, Shakespeare had noted the 18 year old Imran Khan (then still in Pakistan) as a special talent and had arranged that Imran should attend Worcester Royal Grammar School as a boarder, where he would take his A-levels and try for Oxford or Cambridge, playing for Worcestershire between 1971 and 1976. According to 'Wounded Tiger: A History of Cricket in Pakistan', *'This intervention of Wing Commander William Shakespeare, changed Imran's life'*

Between 1974, until his death in 1976, he was the Worcestershire County Cricket Club President.

<http://cricmash.com/cricket-and-literature/william-shakespeare-nature-might-stand-up-and-say-this-was-a-man>

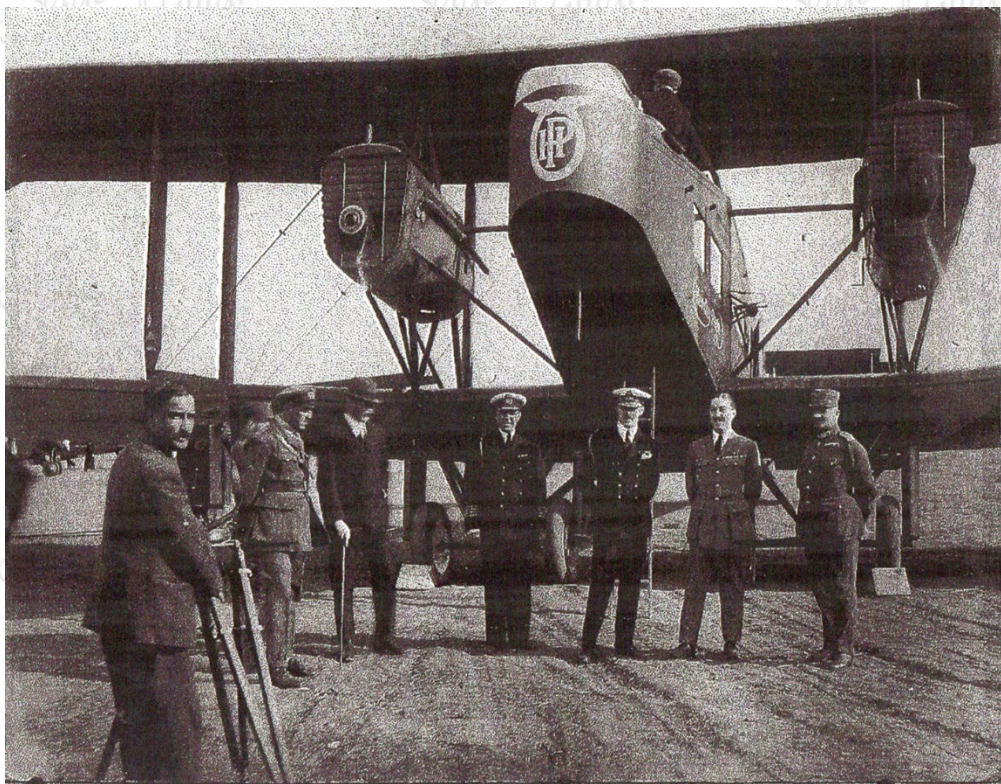


ADDITIONAL TO THE WING COMMANDERS MEDAL THE GROUP INCLUDES:

- 1) British Empire Aviator's Certificate No 3548 with photograph, dated 7 Sept 1916
 - 2) Worcestershire Regiment cap badge
 - 3) Beautiful Royal Flying Corps wings, cast and hand tooled 72mm 9.6g possibly gold
 - 4) Royal Flying Corps cloth flying badge. Removed from uniform, extremely fine example
 - 5) City of Worcester Mayor's Key, William A Bennett (1938-1945), boxed
 - 6) 9ct gold and enamel neck badge with arms of Worcester, Birmingham 1931, 19g
 - 7) Small penknife embossed with Shakespeare's name. This with most of gilt finished rubbed off.
- Photographs & Documents:
- 8) Typed itinerary of the first Flight to Greece, 9 October 1919, from Major Humphrey on Handley Page Ltd notepaper to Captain Shakespeare

- 9) Typed carbon copy of Shakespeare's 16 page report of the flight headed 'across Europe by air'
 - 10) A 1919 Greek Newspaper featuring (with portrait) Shakespeare's famous flight.
 - 11) A foreign hotel bills and Greek newspaper and paper money, 1919, presumably souvenirs of the flight
 - 12) Photograph Handley Page 0/400 converted bomber G-EALY as flown by Shakespeare
 - 13) Unopened emergency ration tin of 'Bovril'. dated 1941
 - 14) Various newspaper cuttings relating to Shakespeare, his flights and a detailed obituary.
 - 15) Royal Flying Corps Tie
- Additionally a small amount of copied research





CAPTAIN SHAKESPEARE 2ND FROM LEFT

9.10.19.

Handley Page
Ltd.

From Major Humphery

To Capt. Shakespeare.

Flight to Greece.

Provision of Petrol.

400 gallons of petrol will be available at Lyons, Pisa and Taranto. These arrangements have been made through the Asiatic Petroleum Co.. Their agent in Lyons is Monsieur Fennaine, No.1 Rue Constantine, Lyons. The petrol will be on Fort Bron aerodrome by the time you arrive. As regards Pisa, 400 gallons of spirit is being delivered to the aerodrome there by the Asiatic Petroleum Co.'s agents, Messrs. Fabis Carsos, and ditto at Taranto by their agents, Messrs. Francisco, Paolo, Traversa & Figli. The spirit at these 3 places must be paid for in cash, and receipts should be collected by you and forwarded in one bunch together with your report from Athens.

Notification of Progress.

Please forward telegrams to the firm at your discretion from your various landing places en route. One of the report forms, a supply of which is being given to you, should be forwarded to the firm on your arrival at Athens to cover the complete flight from Cricklewood; afterwards we require one form per week.

Passenger Flights in Athens.

Instructions regarding passenger flights etc. after your arrival at Athens will be given to you by Major Eldridge, the firm's representative in that city for the exhibition, but it should be noted for your information that the short passenger flights which are being arranged at 100 drachmas per passenger should not occupy more than 15 or 20 minutes each.

General.

Please fill up completely with petrol and oil in Paris from our stocks on Le Bourget Aerodrome. The oil



