

**THE GREAT WAR TRIO TO AN 84 SQUADRON SE5A FIGHTER PILOT WHO WAS SHOT DOWN BY A GERMAN ACE AND TAKEN PRISONER IN MARCH 1918. PREVIOUSLY AN OBSERVER AND CLAIMED AT LEAST ONE AERIAL VICTORY, HE WAS KILLED IN A FLYING ACCIDENT IN 1922**



1914/15 STAR 'LIEUT R.E. DUKE. A.CYC.C.', BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS 'LIEUT R.E. DUKE. R.A.F.'. IN NAMED BOXES OF ISSUE, WITH MEDAL ENVELOPES

2/Lt Robert Edward DUKE was born on 29 January 1894, the son of Reverend E H Duke. Attending Trinity College, Cambridge in 1913, he was commissioned as temporary 2/Lieutenant on the General List on 22 October 1914 and soon after was posted to 13th King's Royal Rifle Corps. Seconded to 21st Division Cyclist Company on 16 February 1915, on 20 July he was promoted (temp) Lieutenant, Army Cyclist Corps and served in France from 10 September 1915. At some point in 1916 he was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps and on 23 August 1916 he formally joined the Royal Flying Corps and was appointed Flying Officer (Observer). Joining 4 Squadron from the latter date, on 1 November, he claimed an aerial victory:

*"2nd Lt Cave & Lt R E Duke, 4 Sqn, EA crashed south of Miraumont – 2nd Lt Cave and Lt Duke, 4 Sqn, saw a hostile machine diving onto a BE2d. The BE2d was brought down and fell near Courecelette. 2nd Lt Cave and Lt Duke attacked and brought down the hostile machine, which they saw skim over the trees south of Miraumont and stall and side-slip near Beau-Regard dove-cote."*

Days later, on 10 November 1916, he was slightly injured when on taking off for an artillery patrol when his aircraft hit a farm cart. Duke carried on flying with 4 Squadron until 12 January 1917, when he returned to England to start training as a pilot. Appointed Flying Officer on 30 March 1917, he joined Expeditionary Force I.A. Dep as a Sopwith Scout pilot on 28 April 1917.





Duke was posted to 84 fighter Squadron in France on 28 January 1918. This squadron was equipped with SE5a's, their most famous Ace being Andrew Beauchamp-Proctor VC with 54 victories, though a had only achieved his first victory by the time Duke arrived. Noted as crashing on take-off on 24 February 1918, he appears to have been uninjured and remained flying

After a combat on 6 March, flying SE5a A8946, Lieutenant Duke was reported missing in action, last seen west of Renansart at 09:40 at about 12,000 feet, his aircraft most likely being that claimed by German Ace Hans Pippart for his 8th Victory. Whether Duke was injured is unknown, he was however taken prisoner of war, remaining as such until repatriated on 14 December 1918

<https://www.theaerodrome.com/aces/germany/pippart.php>



Post war, Duke continued flying with the BAT Co, doing exhibition flights at Amsterdam and after BAT went into liquidation, he purchased an Armstong Whitworth FK8 for joy riding with a Dutch company. On that company failing, he became a pilot with Aircraft Transport & Travel Ltd but was killed during a flying accident on 7 April 1922, when his DH18a collided with a Farman Goliath over Thieuloy-St-Antoine, Oise, France.

## **COLLISION IN MID-AIR**

### **FURTHER DETAILS OF CRASH BY AEROPLANES IN FRANCE**

(United Service Message.)

London, April 8.

The aeroplanes which crashed in France on Friday met head on. The only British victim is Captain R. E. Duke, who was piloting the Daimler. The collision happened near the small village of Thieuloy-Stantons, 14 miles from Besuvals.

The Goliath machine, piloted by Captain Mire and Mechanic Summonet, left La Bourget, Paris, with three passengers, M.M. Hurie and Brucy and Madame Brucy. The weather was very misty over the village market square, and the Daimler suddenly loomed out of the mist and crashed into the Goliath. The machines appeared for a moment to be locked together and wreathed in flames. Then the Daimler fell into a meadow, one wing and tail being smashed. The Goliath somersaulted into a meadow a little further off. Villagers rushed to the scene and extricated from the wreckage six corpses and a mutilated and dying survivor. A small pageboy from the Daimler is the only survivor.

The London "Times" says that the Brucys were members of a New York family.

Both pilots were well-known in the continental services. Captain Mire, who was pilot of a French 'plane, was one of the ablest of the French flyers, and a famous air fighter in the war. He won the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille Militaire. Captain Duke, the pilot of the English machine, was celebrated in the dual role of composer and airman. He composed the music for a recent festival at Portsmouth. He used to tell his friends that the exhilaration of flying inspired him with ideas for musical compositions.





Condition near mint