



Richard Ernest Hagley

12 White Street

Richard was 15 when war broke out in 1914 and was soon to begin training as a pupil engineer with the Midland Railway. Following his 18th birthday in July 1917 he was called up in January 1918. First he attended an “OTTW” – Officer Technical Training Wings course and then a course at Reading School of Military Aeronautics to become an Observer Officer with the Royal Flying Corps (which on 1 April 1918 became the RAF). After training he was given a temporary commission as a Second Lieutenant with the Observer Officers on 18 June 1918.

Posted with the British Expeditionary Force on 20 June 1918 to France with No 9 Squadron of the RAF, Richard was engaged on reconnaissance over the front lines.



A sergeant of the Royal Flying Corps demonstrates an aerial reconnaissance camera fixed to the fuselage of a BE2c aircraft, 1916. © IWM (Q 33850)

Reconnaissance aeroplanes had a crew of two – the pilot and the observer. The Observer took photographs of enemy lines -

the entire battle front was photographed at least twice a day. Aerial Photography was used by both sides to assess troop and equipment movement, the position of defences, and plan future attacks. Seeing the battlefield from above was a major step forward in battlefield technology.

Like so many air crew his tour of active service was very short as he was wounded on 4 July 1918, less than a fortnight after his overseas posting. He then spent four weeks in hospital. His injuries were serious enough to bar him from any further flying duties – in November 1918 he was declared only fit for ground duties at “Home” (within the UK). Richard was posted with Training Depot Squadrons at Stonehenge, Cranwell and nearer home in Matlock. He was demobilised on 28 March 1919.

Richard returned home to White Street and resumed his career with the Midland Railway Company. In 1925 he married Violet Walker, a local girl and they had a daughter, Christine, in 1926. At some point they moved away from Derby and by 1939 were registered as living in Harrow in Middlesex. During World War 2 Richard served in the Home Guard as Lieut-Colonel of the 2nd Battalion of the Buckinghamshire Home Guard for which he was awarded the OBE in 1944. He worked as an engineer, living in London before moving to Dorset in 1957. He died in Salisbury in 1979.