



FLIGHT SERJEANT REGINALD JAMES MOODY

SERVICE NO. 626

8TH SQUADRON, RFC

DIED 4TH MARCH 1917 AGED 22

Reginald James Moody, the fifth son of Charles George and Ellen Moody, was born in Odiham in 1894. His father worked "on his own account" as a "Gas and Hot Water Engineer, Gas Fitter, Smith, etc" and in 1901 and 1911 the family were living in Chapel Terrace, North Warnboroughⁱ. In 1911, Reg, aged 16, was a gas fitter assistant to his father, as were his brothers, Francis, 18, and Harold, 14. The three eldest brothers, Arthur, 24, George, 22 and Albert, 20, were no longer at home. Reg was a patrol leader in the 2nd Odiham (Town) Scout Group and is commemorated on the Group Roll of Honourⁱⁱ.

In February 1913 Reg enlisted and joined the RFC on 1 March 1913. He was part of the first wave of the RFC to go to France on 12 August 1914. Whilst there he rapidly rose through the non-commissioned ranks to qualified observer. He decided to "take his ticket" and in November 1916 achieved his "Wings" having been awarded the Aviators Certificate (No.3889) of the Royal Aero Club, which led to formal pilot training at Netheravon. Sadly, after only three weeks back in France, the BE2d 6252 two-seater flown by Reg and his observer, 2nd Lt Edmund Horn, was shot down by a German scout plane within an hour of leaving their base. The burning plane crashed to the ground "on the Allied side of the lines, south of Berneville, southwest of Arras."

ⁱⁱⁱ Neither crew member survived.

For many years it was believed that the plane was the 26th victim of Baron von Richthofen, the 'Red Baron' as shown in Illustration 3 below.

However, the RAF Museum, Hendon and John Moody, a great nephew of Reg Moody, have provided details from different sources which disprove this assumption and confirm that the German pilot was in fact Oberleutnant Werner Voss claiming his 12th victory. This evidence and much of the detail above appear in *Under the Guns of the German Aces*, by Norman Franks and Hal Gibling, 1997^{iv} and *Cross & Cockade Great Britain Journal*, 1983^v.

Further evidence in unravelling the details of which German ace did shoot down Reg's plane was found in 1983 as the result of a throwaway remark made during a work lunch break by another great nephew. The words "My mother's uncle was shot down by the Red Baron!" were overheard by Peter Wright, an avid aviation history researcher with a particular interest in the Red Baron's victories. Wright offered to



find out more. After consulting numerous sources he discovered that , unlike Werner Voss's 12th victim, the plane shot down by the Red Baron, reportedly 'just before noon' on 4 March 1917, was not at the right time, 'just before 10.30 am' or place to have been the one flown by Reg. Furthermore, the Red Baron's combat report indicated that he had not been able to see the plane he had shot down crash, so he was unable to positively claim it as his 23rd victory^{vi}.

Following his death, Reg's Officer, Major Gossage, wrote in his letter of condolence to Mr and Mrs Moody –

"The machine was attacked by a German and shot down. Both your son and the observer, Lieut. Horn, were instantly killed as the machine fell to the ground. On behalf of the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Squadron I beg to tender our most heartfelt sympathy in your bereavement. We mourn the loss of a gallant comrade, and one whom we admired greatly. Although your son had not been long with us he had already shown himself to be a skilful and capable pilot, and he was one of the type both as a pilot and as a soldier which we can ill afford to lose."^{vii}

Reg was awarded the 1914 Star, the British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal 1914-19. He was buried with full military honours at Warlincourt Halte British cemetery at Saulty, south-west/west of Arras.

His brother, Albert, a sergeant in the Border Regiment, was killed in action in Flanders later in 1917. Three other brothers also served their countries, but survived. Arthur, John Moody's grandfather, served with the Royal Engineers. George, having emigrated to Canada in 1912, served with the Winnipeg Rifles and Harold, the youngest, joined the RFC. Sadly, the loss of two of his sons in action, following a nervous breakdown before the war, then other health problems 'heart trouble ... and ... dropsy', proved too much for Charles Moody. He committed suicide in January 1918. He had always been an involved and well-respected member of the community. He had been, amongst other things, 'on the old School Board ... a Governor of the Odiham Grammar School, a Trustee of Odiham Consolidated Charities', and to the end was 'a Guardian of the Poor, Rural District Councillor, and member of the local Tribunal'.^{viii}



ⁱ Source – 1911 and 1901 Censuses, Odiham, Hampshire ref: RG14PN6246 RG78PN296 RD109 SD1 ED12 SN193 and Class: RG12: Piece 1102: Folio: 54; Page: 26.

ⁱⁱ Tom Flintham, http://2ndodihamscouts.org.uk/roll_of_honour.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Franks, N and Giblin, H, 1997, *Under the Guns of the German Aces*, Grub Street, p.83

^{iv} *ibid*

^v Wright, Peter, 1983 “Richthofen’s 23rd – or was it?” *Cross & Cockade Great Britain Journal*, Vol.14, No. 3, pp.122-125

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} The Hants & Berks Gazette, 17 March 1917

^{viii} The Hants & Berks Gazette, 26 January 1918

