

**All Saints Churchyard,
Beeston Regis, Norfolk**

War Grave



Lest We Forget

World War 1



CAPTAIN

BERT JAMES

3RD SQUADRON, R.A.F.

7TH MAY, 1918 Age 22

Bert JAMES

Bertie James was born on 8th June, 1895 at Balaklava, South Australia to parents Joseph Charles Dodge James & Emily James (nee Reynolds).

Joseph Charles Dodge James, father of Bert James, died 2nd March, 1914 in Perth, Western Australia.

Bert James left Australia on 23rd March, 1916 on *Malwa* to join the Royal Flying Corps in England.

The Royal Flying Corps

The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was the air arm of the British Army before and during the First World War, until it merged with the Royal Naval Air Service on 1st April, 1918 to form the Royal Air Force. During the early part of the war, the RFC supported the British Army, by artillery co-operation and photographic reconnaissance. This work gradually led RFC pilots into aerial battles with German pilots and later in the war included the strafing of enemy infantry and emplacements, the bombing of German military airfields and later the strategic bombing of German industrial and transportation facilities.

From the Supplement to *The London Gazette* – 14 June, 1916:

SUPPLEMENTARY TO REGULAR UNITS OR CORPS.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS

The undermentioned to be 2nd Lts (on prob).

3rd June 1916

Bert James

Newspaper item – *The Register*, Adelaide, South Australia – 10 August, 1916:

LIEUT. BERT JAMES

Mr Bert James, son of Mrs J. C. James, of Military road, Semaphore, who left Adelaide by the Malwa on March 23 for London with the intention of joining the Royal Flying Corps, has been given a commission as lieutenant in that branch of the service. He is an old P.A.C. boy.



LIEUT. BERT JAMES

2nd Lieutenant Bert James gained his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate on 15th August, 1916 at Military School, Netheravon, Wiltshire, England in a B.E.2c Biplane.

Newspaper item – *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, South Australia – 10 October, 1916:

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

A LETTER FROM THE SKIES

From the unusual altitude of 6,000 ft. above English soil a young South Australian—Pilot Bert James, of the Royal Flying Corps—addresses a letter to his mother. This epistle, from an aeroplane, which bears the date August 5, reads:—"I expect you will be surprised to know I am writing this 6,000 ft. above mother earth. I am with a friend of mine — quite a young fellow — who has just finished his course and is going to France. He is a fine pilot, and it is just lovely here. We are going to Bournemouth, about 80 or 90 miles from home, having lunch there and coming back this afternoon. I am getting on splendidly, and think no more of going up by myself now than going in a car. I sat for my written examination on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday— (we just got a bump) — and I passed in everything. I have got to do one cross-country trip on my own — altogether about six hours flying — then I will get my wings as a first- class pilot. That will be in about 10 days' time, and I expect to go to France shortly after. We can see the sea now, and it is getting interesting. It is a bit bumpy up here, and the engine is vibrating a good deal."

On August 20 Pilot James further wrote: —"I have passed all my examinations and am now a full-blown aviator. I have got my wings — a badge worn on the left breast when you have qualified as a first-class pilot."

The British Royal Air Force Officers' Service Record for Bert James, No. 3427, recorded his permanent address as Bank of Adelaide, Leadenhall Street, London. His next-of-kin was listed as his mother – Mrs J. C. James, of "Clifton", Military Road, Semaphore, South Australia. A later address was recorded as 1022 Victoria St., Prospect, Adelaide, South Australia. Under Special Qualifications: "*General experience in Electric & Internal combustion engineering.*" "*Since joining R.F.C. Machines flown M.F.A. St and L. H., B.R.'s, Moro, S.W., Bleriot, G.W. (Bullet), Morane Buller, Biplane and Pavosol, Bristol Scout, Sop. Scout. Passed special school of flying, Gosport.*"

[Transcription from Find My Past of Bert James' Air Force record:

service record: 03/06/1916 - 28/06/1916.....Oxford28/06/1916 - no date.....7RSNo date -
17/08/1916.....8RS17/08/1916 - 24/09/1916.....1RS24/09/1916 -
30/07/1917.....3 Squadron30/07/1917 - 27/08/1917.....Home Establishment27/08/1917- no
date.....62 TSNotice dated 09/09/17.....40 TSNotice dated
01/10/1917.....86(?) SqdnNotice dated 15/10/1917.....Eastern Brigade N.E.PNotice dated
06/12/1917.....63 TSAppointments and Promotions14/06/1916.....2nd Lt (On Probation
ATC)05/10/1916.....Confirmed09/09/1916.....Flying Officer
03/08/1917.....Lieutenant11/09/1917.....Temporary Captain & Flight Commander

Lieutenant Bert James was appointed as Temporary Captain & Flight Commander while his commanding officer was on leave.

Captain Bert James was attached to No. 63 Training Squadron, R.A.F. which was located at R.A.F. Joyce Green, near Dartford.

R.A.F. Joyce Green

Joyce Green, at Long Reach, near Dartford, Kent was one of the first Royal Flying Corps (RFC) airfields. It was established in 1911 by Vickers Limited (the aircraft and weapons manufacturer) who used it as an airfield and testing ground. At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the RFC followed and established a base. Subject to frequent flooding and a reputation as being unsuitable and too dangerous for training, it was eventually replaced by a more suitable site at RAF Biggin Hill.

The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was established in May 1912. Initially the RFC regularly visited Joyce Green for testing and reviewing prototype aircraft. After the outbreak of war in 1914, Joyce Green became an 'air defence'

airfield to protect London from bombing raids by Zeppelins. The airfield was to house a permanent RFC unit, under No. 6 Wing, and the first occupants were No. 10 Reserve Squadron with a variety of aircraft including Henry Farman's, Vickers FB5 and FB9, DH2 and FE8 machines. The role of this unit was to receive pupils from preliminary training schools for final training for their wings. Each course consisted of about 20 pupils and lasted two or three weeks. This included time spent at Lydd where aerial gunnery was practised at the Hythe range. On gaining their wings the young pilots would get a 48-hour pass before being posted to the Front.

No. 63 Training Squadron moved to R.A.F. Joyce Green on 1st June, 1917 from R.A.F. Ternhill (Shropshire) & moved to R.A.F. Redcar (North Yorkshire) late 1918/early 1919. *(Extract from Wikipedia)*

Captain Bert James was instructing 2nd Lieutenant G. Nash in an Avro 504 serial No. B8707 from R.A.F. Joyce Green, near Dartford, Kent, England on 7th May, 1918 when it collided mid-air with another plane.

Captain Bert James died at 7.45 pm on 7th May, 1918 within sight of airfield at R.A.F. Joyce Green, near Dartford, Kent, England as the result of 2 planes colliding in mid-air.

A death for Bert James, aged 22, was registered in the June quarter, 1918 in the district of Dartford, Kent, England.

A Court of Inquiry was held: "*The court having considered the evidence are of the opinion that the accidents to Avro. B8707 in which Capt. B. James and 2nd Lieut. G. Nash were killed, and to Avro. C4477. in which 2nd Lieut. J. G. Ward was killed, was due to the following causes*"- 1. *That Avro C.4477 collided with Avro. B8707 when in mid-air about 2,000 feet up, both being engaged in practising Aerial Fighting.* 2. *That both machines crashed to the ground out of control, causing instantaneous death to Capt. B. James, 2nd Lieut. G. Nash and 2nd Lieut. J. G. Ward."*

Captain Bert James was buried in All Saints Churchyard, Beeston Regis, Norfolk, England (north of Church) and has a Private Headstone. His death is still acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. (It is believed that Captain James was buried in the Churchyard at Beeston Regis as he had family members that lived there.)

Second Lieutenant Gordon Nash, the son of William Gardener Nash & Alice Nash, of Crayfield, St. Pauls Cray, Kent, England was buried in Foots Cray Baptist Chapelyard, Kent, England. He is the only Commonwealth War Grave in the Chapelyard.

Second Lieutenant John Gordon Ward, the son of John and Anna Louisa Ward, of Dorridge Croft, Dorridge, Birmingham, was buried Heaton Cemetery, Bolton, Lancashire, England.

Newspaper item – *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, South Australia –28 May, 1918:

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS

DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY

Mrs. E. James, Military-road, Semaphore, has received the following notification from the Secretary, Air Ministry, dated May 10: -"Deeply regret to inform you that report just received states that Captain BERT JAMES, Royal Air Force, is reported to have been killed on May 7. The Air Council express their sympathy. – Secretary Air Ministry."

Captain Bert James left South Australia on March 23, 1916 for England, where he joined the Royal Flying Corps. He passed as flight lieutenant on June 3, 1916, and was sent to France, flying over the lines for twelve months. On July 17, 1917 he had a "come down" some thousands of feet and smashed his machine; but got off with a shaking. On July 19, 1917, he got another "come down," landing in a shellhole, wrecking his machine, hurting his knee, and receiving a shock. Then he was sent to England for a rest. While there he passed as captain. He was made instructor, and while the commanding officer was on leave Captain James was put in his, place, being in charge, of 50 officers and 300 men. He showed great skill in the short time he was in charge. Captain James, in writing home, in all his letters, expressed his great pleasure in his occupation. He thoroughly enjoyed his work.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Captain Bert James, aged 21, of 3rd Squadron, Royal Air Force. He was the son of Mrs Emily James.

Captain Bert James is remembered on the Commemorative Roll Book, located in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Commemorative Roll records the names of those Australians who died during or as a result of wars in which Australians served, but who were not serving in the Australian Armed Forces and therefore not eligible for inclusion on the Roll of Honour.



Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial (*Capital Photographer*)



Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial & Find My Past





Bert James



Newspaper Notices

ANOTHER AIRMAN



Flight Lieutenant Bert James, son of Mrs J. C. James, Semaphore/ The machine is of the same type as the late Lieutenant Warneford, V.C., used when he “downed” his Zeppelin some months ago.

(*Chronicle*, Adelaide, South Australia – 25 November, 1916)

MOTORING

The important role taken by the motor in the various military departments is well known. Many drivers have heard the call of their country, and they have guided cars to places where they would have deemed it impossible for one to travel in the ordinary course of events. The Flying Cops has also claimed the attention of motor drivers and several South Australians have received commissions in that branch. One of the most recent is Captain Bert James, who got his instruction at Mr A. E. Terry’s motor school, Adelaide.

(*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, South Australia – 5 October, 1917)

COLLISION BETWEEN AEROPLANES

THREE OFFICERS KILLED

Two pilots and an observer were killed in a collision between aeroplanes, which occurred over Dartford on Tuesday night. The victims were Capt. Bertram James, Lt. Gordon Nash, and Lt. James Gordon Ward. The accident was witnessed by a large number of people, the machines having been performing evolutions over the town for some time. Shortly before eight o'clock the aeroplanes came into collision, and one was seen to nose dive to the ground. Capt. James had acted as instructor at an aerodrome for about two months. Lt. Nash's home is not far from the scene of the accident.

(The Scotsman, Edinburgh, Scotland – 9 May, 1918) & (Exeter & Plymouth Gazette, England – 9 May, 1918)

Casualties

Captain BERT JAMES, R.A.F., who was accidentally killed while flying on May 7th, aged 22, was the son of Mrs. J. C. James, of Semaphore, South Australia. .

(Flight, 16 May, 1918)

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIERS DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY

Captain Bert JAMES, of the Royal Flying Corps, who was recently killed, was the youngest son of the late Mr J. C. James, Balaklava, who died in the West about four years ago. Before leaving for the front, Captain James was employed as traveller by city softgoods houses.

(The Advertiser, Adelaide, South Australia – 30 May, 1918)

PERSONAL

At Thursday's meeting of the Port Adelaide City Council it was decided to send letters of condolence to the relatives of the following soldiers from Port Adelaide killed in action:- Captain Bert James.....

(Port Adelaide News, South Australia – 31 May, 1918)

WAR CASUALTIES

Mrs H. Mort and Mrs B. Williams, of Brunswick Junction, have received news that their brother, Flight-Captain Bert James, of Royal Flying Corps was killed in action somewhere in France on May 7.

(The West Australian, Perth, Western Australia – 8 June, 1918)

IN MEMORIAM

Anzac Heroes

JAMES – In fond memory of Flight Captain Bertie James (Bert), of Royal Flying Corps, killed in an accident at Dartford, England, May 7, 1918, only brother of E. Mort and B. Williams, of Brunswick and second son of late J. C. James, of Greenbushes and South Australia, brother-in-law of J. H. Mort, Brunswick Junction.

His duty done

Inserted by Bess, Em and Harry

(*The West Australian*, Perth, Western Australia – 7 May, 1919)

HEROES OF THE GREAT WAR

JAMES – In loving memory of my dear son, Captain Bert James, Royal Flying Corps, who was killed by accident while instructing in England on May 7, 1918.

You're always in my thoughts, dear Bert,
It is sweet to breathe your name;
In life I loved you dearly,
In death I do the same.
I mourn for you, dear Bert,
But not with outward show,
For those who mourn sincerely
Mourn silently and low.

-Inserted by his loving mother, E. James. Semaphore.

(*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, South Australia – 7 May, 1919) & (*Chronicle*, Adelaide, South Australia – 10 May, 1919)

HEROES OF THE GREAT WAR

JAMES – In loving memory of my dear son, Captain Bert James, who was killed through accident, R.F.C., England May 7, 1918.

You have taken him, O Beautiful England,
My only and loving son,
A broken life is all I have here;
In silent grief and often a tear,
No human eye can ever trace,
The sadness behind a smiling face.

-Inserted by his loving mother.

(*The Advertiser*, Adelaide, South Australia – 7 May, 1920)

IN MEMORIAM

Anzac Heroes

JAMES – In loving memory of Bert (Flight-Captain Royal Flying Corps), accidentally killed at Dartford, England, May 7, 1918.

Inserted by his loving sisters and brother-in-law, Em, Bess and Harry

(The West Australian, Perth, Western Australia – 7 May, 1920)

IN MEMORIAM

Anzac Heroes

JAMES – A tribute of love to the memory of my dear and only brother, Captain Bert James, R.F.C., killed May 7, 1918 aged 22.

Ever remembered.

Inserted by his loving sister, Bessie, and brother-in-law, E. R. England.

(The West Australian, Perth, Western Australia – 6 May, 1922)

IN MEMORIAM

Anzac Heroes

JAMES – In loving memory of Captain Bert James, R.F.C., killed at Dartford, May 8, 1918.

Inserted by his loving sister, Bessie.

(The West Australian, Perth, Western Australia – 9 May, 1923)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for cemeteries and memorials in 23,000 locations, in 153 countries. In all 1.7 million men and women from the Commonwealth forces from WWI and WWII have been honoured and commemorated in perpetuity.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as part of its mandate, is responsible for commemorating all Commonwealth war dead individually and equally. To this end, the war dead are commemorated by name on a headstone, at an identified site of a burial, or on a memorial. War dead are commemorated uniformly and equally, irrespective of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Not all service personnel have a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone. In some instances the relative chose to have their own memorial/headstone placed on the deceased's grave. These private headstones are not maintained by the CWGC as they have no jurisdiction to maintain them.

Captain Bert James has a Private Headstone.

All Saints Churchyard, Beeston Regis, Norfolk, England

All Saints Churchyard, Beeston Regis has 2 Commonwealth War Graves – both from World War 1.



All Saints Churchyard, Beeston Regis (Photos by Stephen Drury – Find a Grave)



Photo of Captain Bert James's Private Headstone in All Saints Churchyard, Beeston Regis, Norfolk, England.



(Photo by Moominpappa06 – flickr)

Here lies all that can die of

BERT

Captain 3rd Squadron R.A.F.

Son of

J.C and E. JAMES

(of Semaphore, S. Australia)

Killed May 7th 1918

Aged 22 years

“Greater love hath no man than

this. That he lay down his life

for his friends