

CAPTAIN PERCY KYME HOBSON MC (1905-09)

He was born 20 November 1893 near Holbeach, Lincolnshire.

After a lot of travelling around Canada and America he came back to the UK at the start of WW1. After initially serving in the Hon Artillery Company he transferred on 10 May 1917 to the Royal Flying Corps and was posted to 84 Squadron on 22nd October 1917.

According to the *London Gazette* of 22 June 1918 he was awarded the Military Cross "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. Observing a large body of troops with transport, he descended to within 200 feet, and, despite very severe enemy rifle and machine gun fire from the ground, dropped four bombs, three of which were direct hits on the transport, causing severe casualties, which were increased by the accurate machine gun fire brought to bear on his target. On a later occasion, he observed a large body of troops moving across the open, and attacked these with bombs and machine gun fire, causing many casualties and scattering them in all directions. He has been responsible for the destruction of four enemy machines, and has at all times shown a complete disregard for personal danger"



He is credited with shooting down 7 German planes, details as follows :-

	Date	Time	Unit	Aircraft	Opponent	Location
1	13 Feb 1918	1210	84	S.E.5a (D260)	Albatros D.V (DES)	NE of St. Quentin
2	18 Feb 1918	1100	84	S.E.5a (C5313)	Albatros D.V (OOC)	Beaurevoir
3	13 Mar 1918	1010	84	S.E.5a (D260)	Albatros D.V (DES)	NE of St. Quentin
4	16 Mar 1918	1125	84	S.E.5a (D260)	LVG C (DES) ¹	Villers Outreaux
5	20 Apr 1918	0920	84	S.E.5a (B6410)	Albatros D.V (OOC)	SE of Marcelcave
6	21 Apr 1918	1300	84	S.E.5a (B6410)	Albatros C (DES)	SW of Mézières
7	23 Apr 1918	1640	84	S.E.5a (B6410)	Fokker DR.I (OOC)	Framerville

In December 2011, Paul Taylor (Headmaster of the College) brought to our attention the following hand written journal (transcribed by N Porter, Hon Sec SOF), which gives detail of his life (original spelling respected). This was passed to Paul by Percy Hobson's niece, Margaret Rooke, to whom we are very grateful :-

Born 20/11/1893 during a snow storm they tell me at Fleet Church End near Holbeach in Lincolnshire. Was mostly in trouble as a kid chiefly on account of a violent temper – mother had to call in the farm foreman to deal with me.

Schools: Council school at Fleet – day school – by bicycle, at Long Sutton –first boarding school at Wursley – Gloucestershire – Public School Framlingham College, Suffolk. Excellent at nothing. Family left Fleet and farmed at Bungay, Suffolk. Had to work during hols on farm – later apprenticed to Mann Egerton's electrical dept at Ipswich – learnt nothing except to blow fuses.

About 1912 went to Canada – passage paid by my father, and given £5 to see me through till I got a job – the £5 went during the voyage "Express of Ireland". Liverpool to Quebec – train to Toronto where some labour bureau sent me to a farm at Ayr – Ontario – Scotch Canadian farmer – made to work all hours, day and night – stuck this until autumn then got a job in factory, slapping paint onto agricultural implements – ten hours per day. In the spring quit this and went to Buffalo by Niagara Falls, got job in a store cleaning ladies fur coats, starvation wage –when ice broke on the Great Lakes got job as deckhand on lake steamer, very good food and work not too strenuous – accommodation lousy –got my first taste of lice.....visited Chicago then up to Lake Superior, deserted ship at Port Arthur and hopped a freight train to Winnipeg – another spell on a farm a few

miles south of Winnipeg – not so bad as a large farm with several hired hands. Stayed there until sufficient funds available to buy a railway ticket to Vancouver and not hop another freight – after a couple of days in Vancouver went across to Victoria – Vancouver Island – got a job as assistant carpenter building wooden houses outside the city – on completion was again looking for a job – one came up at the cement works at Bamberton some 30 miles north of Victoria – was employed as a sort of handyman – first job was painting oil tanks with a Chinaman on the other end of the plank – lowering the stage was a bit frightening as the Chinaman was apt to let out too much rope, leaving the stage all cock-eyed. Another job was counting the cement bags as they shot down a chute into the hold of the ship – as they loaded at night the endless line of bags made the job just one effort of keeping awake – I was later promoted to the staff and really enjoyed eating in the staff mess – living with two others in a staff house – my job principally was Chinese timekeeper and looking after their interests in general – this was a first class job with the use of a motor boat for salmon fishing and cruising round the islands – about 5 miles by motor boat across the inlet then 15 miles by train to Victoria which I visited. The leading hotel was a super affair called "The Empress" but funds didn't allow us inside – I said one day I would stay there and some 45 years later I did.



Then came the first world war so I had to give up the idea of crossing the Pacific – didn't join up in Canada but took train across from Seattle to New York and by "Lusitania" to Liverpool – I paid my own passage and landed in England with 20 golden sovereigns in my pocket. Very pleased with myself.

Joined up with the H.A.C. in London – driver P.K. Hobson got 9/11 per week and was well off. After a hell of a long time messing about the South and East Anglia got fed up so joined R.F.C. – after a bit of ground training was gazetted second lieutenant and posted to Salisbury Plain for flying instruction – now I was really in the money 12/- 2nd Lieut plus 8/- flying pay – a pound a day – nearly a millionaire – flying instructors were a hard-hearted lot of bastards – after 20 minutes dual instruction I was sent up solo by a Scot named Blackwood – managed to get down all in one piece, I was lucky, but many weren't – the number killed was terrific. Posted to France still



not knowing how to really fly a machine much less fight it – From the pilots Pool I was set to 84 Squadron with Sholto Douglas O.C. – It was a bad time with the RFC – they were being shot down wholesale – It was cheerful to be posted to a squadron where I found the majority of recent additions writing letters "To be opened when I have gone" – our patrols were over Hunland and we crossed the front line in the Ypres section – more by good luck than anything I managed to get away with it and survived. 84 Squadron moved about a bit and we were taken off fighter patrols at 18000 feet and brought down to ground staffing when the Huns broke through in March 1918 – at one period we went to a different aerodrome every night, the Huns were certainly

pushing us back. Shot down from ground fire a couple of times – it was nothing to come home with 150 to 200 bullet holes in the machine; however again I got away with it and after doing my spell in France was posted back to England. I was by then a Captain drawing about £45 per month, nearly a multi-millionaire – as far as I was concerned – in England I went to various dromes, after a spot of night flying on the defence of London I became a flying instructor and ended up as such.

My brother ex Australia spent years in hospital after being wounded in the trenches, was demobbed about the same time April 1919. The two of us bought a couple of sailing boats and spent the entire summer on the Norfolk Broads – it was the finest holiday I have ever had, cruising from pub to pub.

Home – November – it was time to think about doing something to earn a living – my brother returned to Australia.

There was nothing to be had in England so decided to take the advice of an old friend of the family who said before I left for Canada "My boy, you are making a mistake. A white man should always go to a black man's country." Booked by Blue Funnel and sailed from Liverpool in December, arriving Cape Town first week in January 1920. Made my way up via East London and Durban to Romeno Marques and on to Malelane in the Eastern Transvaal – my uncle gave me a job on the farm – after a considerable spell with him I started growing vegetables. Another ex RFC man joined me and between us we managed to eke out a living – In 1927 I had

sufficient funds to make a trip home. On my return decided to try my luck in Rhodesia so went straight from Cape Town to Bulawayo. Couldn't find any kind of a job there and funds were running low so pushed up to Livingstone where I found a job with a man who ran a whole string of native stores. Was transferred quite soon to his Broken Hill branch and looked after about a dozen stores in Broken Hill and the district. Later I joined Billy Dunn's transport outfit -this was more in my line, driving trucks about. Andrew Thatcher was one of the drivers -Dec 22nd 1928 I got myself married - big do in Johannesburg, rented a house in Broken Hill and started married life at £35 a month. Thatcher and self got fed up with Billy Dunn and broke away in 1930 - started out on our own with one ton and half Chevrolet bought on the never never system - we soon increased the fleet to 3 lorries, our main run was Broken Hill to Abercorn but Loangwa Concessions gave us quite a bit of work transporting their field men around - later we put in a very low figure for the mail contract Broken Hill - Chambezi and got the job and all government transport that went with it. Going was tough, roads were tracks with stick bridges over rivers - once a vehicle left Broken Hill we had no idea when we would see it again - it was nothing to fall through three or four bridges on one trip which meant getting down to it and repairing the bridges to get through - goods for transport were few and far between and passenger traffic practically nil. Then came the depression - all mines closed and the country was at a standstill. Thatcher and Hobson were like others -broke and creditors threatened to make us bankrupt. However we had two very good friends in Bulawayo where most of the creditors were. They were Hunter, manager of the Shell Company and Bobby Juhl of ?July New Ltd. These two carried a lot of weight and told the other creditors to pipe down - these two both knew that Imperial Airways were to start a service down Africa and would need considerable quantities of aviation spirit at Mpika -it was Shell petrol and Hunter saw to it that we got the contract and Bobby Juhl was happy to let us have the necessary trucks to carry out our Government contracts and cope with the aviation spirit at Mpika. This saved our bacon and we were able to pay all creditors and struggle along and keep our heads above water. There were no fireworks as N Rhodesia took a long while to recover and government had little or no money to spend on development - the roads remained tracks but sufficient funds were found to build permanent steel bridges from Kapini Mposhi through Mpika to the Chambyi River. This was our turning point as Smith and Kitchin handled all the transport north of the river.

We pegged along and improved or rolling stock, kept out of debt but there was never much to spare at the end of each month - we lived and enjoyed ourselves at Broken Hill - we opened up a branch at Lusaka and operated over the Great East Road to St Jameson, this also was tough going."

Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
HOBSON	H.A.C.	Cpl.	
	R.F.C. & R.A.F.	Lieut	

Percy Kyrne

Medal	Bell	Page	Remarks
VICTORIA	1876	1876	} the co. was by C/M... NW/6/30589
BURTON	---	"	
BEAN			

Theatre of War first served in
Date of entry therein

NW/6/30589 E. 1280

Applic for Medal Form 488
Correspondence

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