

## **Norman Maynard Belcher RFC**

Norman Belcher was born in Berrick in 1898, the son of Martyn & Margaret Belcher, one of 4 children. The family farmed Lane End Farm for many years, before moving to Dorchester after the death of Martyn Belcher, but then later moving back to Warborough, near Benson.

In 1917 Norman applied for and was accepted for pilot training in the RFC commencing October 1917. Unfortunately due to issues with colour in the eye sight test, Norman did not qualify as a pilot, switching instead to the role of Observer – which also included photography, gunnery, bomb aiming and navigation. The aircraft Norman would have flown were mainly the DH4 variants, a relatively fast 2 seat bomber with two Lewis machine guns in the rear cockpit operated by the observer.

Norman flew to France and commenced operational duties in May 1918, just as the major German offensive (the Kaiserschlacht) was taking place. The German airforce had the very latest aircraft which were superior in performance to the British ones and losses had been very heavy in April & continued to be heavy throughout the summer. Norman certainly had a lucky escape in August 1918 when he had multiple bullet wounds (14 altogether) in both legs but survived.

Norman finished the war in the newly formed RAF, returned to civilian life and farming in Warborough as a dairy & corn farmer. He married Elizabeth Edwards in November 1923 at St Lawrence's, Warborough, near Benson, and raised the present Belcher Family. The family were still in Warborough in 1939 at "The Lilacs", but at a later date they took over farming at Hale Farm, which is still farmed by the family today.