

EDWARD MORRIS HUTCHINGS



EDWARD MORRIS HUTCHINGS in the uniform of the Royal Flying Corps

Edward Morris Hutchings

Z.105 Flight Sergeant

South African Aviation Corps & 26 Squadron Royal Flying Corps

Born 8 November 1889

Died 18 June 1916

Edward Morris Hutchings was born in Oxford in 1889, the eldest of eight children of Ralph Hutchings and Mary Jane Jones, who had married on 17 Jan 1889. He was named after his grandfather who was born, lived, worked and died in Roke, where he was a farmer. After his father's death in 1910, Edward Morris is shown as working at Hicks Farm, Roke, with his mother now his employer. In 1916, she was living at Willow Cottage, Oxford Road, Benson.

Edward Morris left London on 13th March 1915 on the SS 'Umtata' (Natal Line), for a forty day voyage to Walvis Bay, then a British/Cape Colony enclave in German South West Africa. The passenger list shows his permanent residence as England, but intended future permanent residence as South Africa. He was listed as a civilian and a mechanic, as were thirteen other male passengers, all of them of conscription age. It seems that Edward Morris had joined the military sometime previously, and had then received technical training.

After the South West Africa campaign, Edward Morris returned to England with other volunteers ready for assimilation into 26 Squadron, later embarking for Mombasa and arriving on 31st January 1916.

On 18th June 1916, 26 Squadron moved to a new base at Mbagui and at 9.30 that morning Lt. Bertram, with Flt. Sgt. Hutchings as passenger, started out for that base. The engine of the Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2 had run well on the ground and it appeared to climb satisfactorily. However just after take-off, when at the height of some 200 feet, the pilot was seen to turn the machine around, which then slipped and nose-dived. The engine was found embedded in the ground amid thick bush, with the plane a total wreck. Both pilot and passenger were killed. They were two of only seven deaths in 26 Squadron during the war. Hutchings is listed as South African Air Corps and Bertram as Royal Flying Corps.

The bodies of Lt. Bertram and Flt. Sgt. Hutchings, having been brought from Palms Airfield, were buried at 12 noon on the 19th June at the edge of Mbagui airfield. The service was read by the commanding officer. Flt. Sgt. Hutchings was eventually re-interred in Dar Es Salaam war cemetery (plot 33, row F, grave 16).

The Hutchings family grave in St Helens churchyard has a reference to Edward Morris with the following inscription:

Flt. Sgt. Edward Morris Hutchings

Killed in action June 18th 1916, aged 26

Buried at Handein German East Africa

"THE FITTEST PLACE WHERE MAN CAN DIE IS WHERE HE DIES FOR MAN"