

## Aircraft Crash at East Winch – Airman killed

From the Lynn News of April 19<sup>th</sup>. 1932.



An AVRO 504N – Lynx of the type involved in the crash.

At the inquest on a 22 year old Australian flying pupil whose aeroplane crashed near East Winch railway station on Thursday (14<sup>th</sup>. April 1932) it was revealed that he was making his first solo cross-country flight.

He set out from the Digby Flying School at Scopwick, Lincolnshire, for Bircham Newton Aerodrome, via Lynn, with plenty of petrol for the journey and in a machine that was in perfect condition. He was considered to have more than the average pupil's ability.

Two hours later farm workers saw his machine circling around as if he was looking for somewhere to land. The engine stalled (became unstable through loss of pace) and nose-dived, touching the branches of a tree before crashing in a field, where it burst into flames and was quickly reduced to a wreck of twisted metal.

The pilot was killed by the force of the impact, but those who hurried to the spot were prevented by the flames from dragging his body clear until it had been frightfully burned.

Mr Donald F Jackson (District Coroner) who conducted the inquest at West Winch, on Friday afternoon thanked those who helped to extricate the body.

Group Captain Sidney Smith, commanding officer of No. 2 Flying Training School, Digby, Lincolnshire, said that the dead man, Pilot Officer A.J. Warford-Mein, was under instructions at Digby. He was 23 years of age and had been at the Digby aerodrome since last January.

On Thursday he left the aerodrome at 11.45am on a cross-country flight to Bircham Newton in an Avro Lynx machine numbered K2352. He was fully competent, and the flight was authorised by the chief flying instructor, in addition to the pupil's own instructor.

(Group) Captain Smith added that he had seen the body and was convinced it was Pilot Officer Warford-Mein.

He had seen the place where the accident took place and from the position of the machine there was no doubt that in attempting to make a landing he stalled and struck a tree in a nose dive.

The Coroner: Probably he was dead before the machine burst into flame?

Group Captain Smith: Probably he was killed at the moment of impact. There is not a tremendous lot of room in the pilot's seat, and if the machine is diving, the pilot goes forward and has nothing to protect his head except his flying cap.

Dr. Charles Stuart Woodwark, of Grimston, gave evidence that he had arrived at the scene of the accident at 1.20 and found the charred remains of the pilot by the side of the wrecked aeroplane. He was so extensively charred that the face was unrecognisable, and the muscles were contracted by the great heat, twisting up the limbs. In his opinion death had occurred instantaneously on the machine hitting the ground and probably the cause of death was laceration of the brain.

(Group) Captain Smith interposed that the pilot's safety belt was still fastened and the first action of a man who was conscious would have been to unfasten the belt. The doctor added that the man had a wound in his head.

Leslie Ruskin, a team man, employed at Home Farm, East Winch, which adjoins Station Farm, said that about 1.30 on Thursday afternoon, he and another man were working in a meadow when they saw an aeroplane hovering over a field nearby.

It circled three times as if looking for a landing place. It turned towards Ashwicken and then came round into the wind and dropped suddenly in a nose dive. They ran towards it and saw it crash. He thought the machine was 200 or 300 feet up when it crashed.

It was blazing when they got to it, and almost burnt up. They heard the sound of an explosion. The pilot's body was in the middle of the flames and there was no sign of life at all. They had to wait until the flames died down before they could get the body out.

He had noticed nothing wrong with the machine before it crashed, only that the pilot was looking for a landing. A very strong wind was blowing at this time and it had started to rain.

Fredk. Suckling, farm labourer, corroborated. He said, however, that it had not actually started to rain at the time of the accident and he did not think the wind was very strong.

Cecil Haverson, farm labourer, told the Coroner that the wind seemed to him to be strong at the time of the accident. (Group) Captain Smith asked to be allowed to express appreciation of the efforts made by these three farm workers to extricate the pilot from the machine.

Pc Tillett, of Gayton, gave evidence that he was called to the field where the accident happened at about half past one, and found the machine still in flames. The body of the pilot was in a sitting position lying on its right side among the flames.

With the help of the men who were there he got the body out and as he touched it the parachute fell away and the remainder of the clothing. The body was charred beyond recognition.

Lying around the body were several buckles belonging to the straps which held the pilot in the seat. The doctor arrived just as the body was extricated.

Amongst the wreckage was a metal plate bearing the number 2262; the name, A.V.Roe; and the type number 504N.

Pilot-sergeant Sidney Trout of No. 2 Flying School, Digby, said that he was the flying instructor to Warford-Mein, and sent him off on Thursday on a cross-country flight to Bircham via Lynn. He left Digby at 11.45. The Avro-Lynx plane was one which witness had tested and flown just before this flight, it was in perfect condition.

Warford-Mein had done a total of approximately fifty hours flying and was considered a pupil of above average ability. He had not done cross-country flights before on his own, but had done so in company with instructors. He was perfectly capable of flying by himself to Bircham. He had sufficient petrol for three hours flying, and had not been away from the aerodrome more than two hours when the accident happened.

The Coroner returned a verdict that the man died "of laceration of the brain caused by an aeroplane which he was piloting crashing to the ground, his body being subsequently charred.

The Coroner added; "I think we are indebted to those people who helped pull him out of the flames, because it was not a very nice job. They ought to be congratulated on having done their duty in helping"

Supt. Woodeson added his appreciation for the help they gave the police, and (Group) Captain Smith and Sergt. Trout associated themselves with the expression.

The Coroner added that he was grateful to the RAF Officer and instructor for the help they had given at the inquiry.

Notes: -

**The Avro Lynx** was a re-engined Avro 504K. The Armstrong-Siddeley LYNX engine replacing the original engine

The Avro 504 was a World War I biplane aircraft made by the Avro aircraft company and under licence by others. Production during the War totalled 8,970 and continued for almost 20 years, making it the most-produced aircraft of any kind that served in World War I, in any military capacity, during that conflict. Over 10,000 would be built from 1913 to the time production ended in 1932.

The improved, redesigned and radial engined 504N was produced by Avro in 1925. After evaluation of two prototypes powered by Bristol Lucifer and Armstrong-Siddeley Lynx engines respectively, the Lynx powered aircraft was selected by the RAF to replace the 504K.

592 were built between 1925 and 1932, equipping the RAF's five flying training schools, while also being used as communication aircraft. The 504N was also exported to the militaries of Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Greece,

Thailand and South Africa, with licenced production taking place in Denmark, Belgium, Canada and Japan.

The 504 was the first airplane to strafe troops on the ground as well as the first to make a bombing raid over Germany. It was also the first Allied airplane to be downed by enemy anti-aircraft fire and was Billy Bishop's first army aircraft.

The 504 is easily recognisable because of the single skid between the wheels.

To see a photograph of an Avro Lynx go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31074376@N06/4755312650/>

The Shuttleworth Collection's AVRO Tutor - a later training version of the Avro Lynx may be seen at Old Warden airfield.

Avro Lynx aircraft were also constructed as seaplanes to be delivered to the Greek Government.

An overview of the Avro 504 is given by Douglas Bader a <http://www.verdon-roe.co.uk/#/avro/19091914/504/504videos/>