



Lancelot John Rimmer (1896-1980)

Lancelot John Rimmer was an experienced pilot hired on occasion by Aerofilms Ltd.

Lancelot John Rimmer was born in Seacombe, Cheshire, on the 19th February 1896, the fourth of six children born to Oswald and Mary Rimmer. His father was a Lancashire-born money-lender who worked from home, and in 1901 the family was living at 105 Linacre Road, Litherland (1901 England Census). The 1901 Census shows that the family moved about quite frequently: one child was born in Wood Green, two in Southport, two in Seacombe and the last in Bootle. Lance's mother Mary was born in New Zealand.

Lance's father left England for Canada in about 1907, and in 1911 the rest of the family followed him. The 1911 Census describes Lance as a 'Technical Scholar', and following his arrival in Canada he worked as a Steam Engineer for City Power House at Medicine Hat, Alberta (1916 Canada Census of Manitoba Saskatchewan and Alberta).

Following the outbreak of war, on the 23rd September 1914 at Valcartier, Lance joined the 10th Battalion of the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. His Attestation Paper (Attestation Paper, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, No. 20811) gives his date of birth as 1894: he lied about his age, as according to contemporary recruitment posters the required age for enlistment was between 19 and 38 years and he was only 18 at the time. The 10th Battalion arrived at the Western Front in February 1915 where Lance and his comrades served in the trenches. The battalion war diary records that he and a fellow soldier were wounded, possibly gassed, on Sunday 23rd January 1916 (War Diary of the 10th Battalion). Just a few weeks later on the 2nd March 1916 he saw action at The

Bluff, Ypres, for which he was awarded the Canadian Military Medal (Award Listing – 10th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force).

In the summer of 1916 Lance married Celia (or Cecilia) Gray in Lancashire (England & Wales Marriage Index: 1916-2005). Their first child, Constance Patricia, was born the following year (England & Wales Birth Index: 1916-2005).

Lance served on the front line for three years before joining the Royal Flying Corps ('A Young Man Remembered', 2010).

On the 20th February 1918, the day after his 22nd birthday, Lance was awarded his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate (no. 7736) (Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910-1950). He served as a Flying Officer with the Royal Flying Corps from April 1918 (*Flight*, 1918:434) until July 1919 (*Flight*, 1919:1033). His association with the armed forces continued when in May 1923 he signed up as a Reserve Flying Officer with the RAF (*Flight*, 1923:311). Initially on probation, he was confirmed in rank in 1924 (*Flight*, 1924:81).

After the war he worked for The Berkshire Aviation Company (later known as Berkshire Aviation Tours) giving pleasure flights to paying customers, and was hired as a pilot by Aerofilms Ltd in the 1920s, possibly beyond. *Flight* magazine makes reference to one of his excursions on behalf of the company when he became stranded with the Yorkshire Aeroplane Club:-

28th October 1926: *"Mr. Rimmer has been with us on his Avro for the last ten days. After two nights spent in holding the machine down in a field he came to the conclusion that it was time he had some sleep, and so has been flying daily from the aerodrome while carrying out a photographic survey of a part of Leeds for Messrs. Aerofilms."* (*Flight*, 1926a:706).

4th November 1926: “Mr. Rimmer is still with us, waiting with commendable patience for a fine day to complete his work for Messrs. Aerofilms.” (*Flight*, 1926b:716).

11th November 1926: “Mr. Rimmer has now left us, the more hurriedly because Captain West took him up on ‘LS’ on Saturday and suffered a forced landing with a choked jet. Mr. Rimmer, a little distraught, got out of the machine, went back to the aerodrome, flew away in his Avro, and has not been seen since.” (*Flight*, 1926c:734).

The Berkshire Aviation Company pilots gave demonstrations of flying skills in addition to providing joy rides. In May 1928, for example, the Yorkshire Aeroplane Club reports that Lance gave an exhibition of aerobatics and was the pilot for a demonstration of wing-walking (*Flight*, 1928:387).

In March 1929 Lance went into business with Mr E. E. Freeson to form the North British Aviation Company Ltd, based at Hooton Aerodrome. They were “aeroplane designers and constructors of propeller accessories, motor manufacturers and carriage builders, flying instructors etc” (*Flight*, 1929:226).

In 1933 Lance was hired by Sir Alan Cobham for his National Aviation Day displays. He was in charge of the Avros that flew in the No. 2 ‘Squadron’, and acted as one of the pilots (*Flight*, 1933:1020). He probably knew Sir Alan from his days with The Berkshire Aviation Company where Lance and Sir Alan both worked as pilots.

In the 1940s Lance worked as a test pilot for Martin Hearn (*Flight*, 1947: 328).

Lance and his wife had five children: three boys and two girls. Reginald Frank Rimmer became a pilot like his father; he was killed in action on the 27th

September 1940, aged just 21. Arthur Rimmer also became a pilot. He survived the war but was killed in a crash at Rendcomb in Gloucestershire in 1948 when he was working as a flying instructor ('A Young Man Remembered', 2010).

Lancelot John Rimmer died on the 6th January 1980, aged 83.

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