

Robert Girling Saunders

10 Naval Squadron Royal Naval Air Service KIA 24 June 1917 aged 18



Saunders

Courtesy E.F. Cheesman

Robert was born on 17 July 1898 the son of Sidney and Kate (nee Crisp) Saunders of Ballantines Farm, Warboys. He was the eldest of 4 children and was called Robin by his family. His mother died in 1911 and two years later his father married her sister Martha. Sidney was a well-known figure serving on the Board of Guardians and The Rural District Council. He was regarded as **“one of the most affable and straightforward of men.”**(Hunts Post)

On 17th September 1916, two months after his 18th birthday, Robin joined the Royal Naval Air Service. He attended Eastchurch Flying School and Cranwell where he obtained first class results in his pilot's exams in May 1917. His reports describe him as **“A very good Pilot, a keen and conscientious officer, thoroughly trustworthy and reliable”**. He was recommended for Active Service Scouts.

He became a Flight Sub-lieutenant in 10 (Naval) Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service. On 24 June 1917, 6 weeks after passing his exams, Robin was involved in an encounter with Von Richthofen's (the Red Baron) 'Flying Circus' while on an offensive patrol from his base in Boulogne. He was flying Triplane N5358 and was shot down over Moorslede by Lieutenant Karl Allmenroder who was himself killed 3 days later.

Robin's crashed plane Mike Westrop



He was assumed to be missing and reported as such to the International Red Cross but after 2 months his death was presumed by the return of his pocket book to his father by a German Officer.

He is commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial and also on his mother's grave in Warboys Church Cemetery.

In proud memory of Robert Girling (Robin) who was shot down in France on 24th June 1917 in his 19th year.

Sidney sold the farm in 1920 and moved to Northamptonshire where he died in 1947.

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