

## **John Sheridan Gregory 1889-1918**

John was born on 15 September 1889 in Kensington, London. He attended Westminster School. Starting about 1904, when he would have been 15, the family took regular holidays at his father's holiday home in Walberswick, Suffolk. They probably sailed on the paddle-steamer 'Southwold Belle' from London Bridge. His 'Brownie' photographs suggest bicycle and boat excursions, with school-friends, along the Suffolk coast as far as Aldeburgh. He was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge on 25 June 1908, gained a BA and LLB, and joined Middle Temple in 1911. He set up his business in law while living at Gunterstone Road.

In 1914 he joined the Royal Army Service Corps as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and was promoted to Captain. By 1918 he had transferred to a Royal Flying Corps Squadron on the Western Front and was mentioned in despatches. He flew as an observer/gunner in Armstrong Whitworth FK 8's which were nicknamed "The Big Ack". The pilot sat in front with a fixed Vickers machine gun and the observer sat behind with a trainable 7.7mm Lewis machine gun and basic dual controls. Besides reconnaissance, they could carry either six 40lb phosphorus smoke bombs, or four 65lb bombs or two 112lb bombs on under-wing racks.

On 19 February 1918 he was observer/gunner in a "Big Ack" which was strafed, killing his pilot, Wilson. He nursed the machine back to his base airstrip where he crash landed and was killed. He is buried at Epehy Wood Farm Cemetery, Epehy, Somme, France (Grave Ref: VD14). The Medal Card of Gregory, John Sheridan is held at The National Archives, Kew under Reference: WO 372/8/142203.

His obituary notice: 'Captain John Sheridan Gregory, RFC, who was killed on February 19, was educated by Mr George Egerton, of Somerset Street, W, and at Westminster School (1903-1907), and Trinity College, Cambridge (1908-1911), taking up law as his subject. In 1911 he had successfully passed Parts I and II of the Law Tripos, and graduated with honours, proceeding to the degrees of BA and LLB. Subsequently he entered the Middle Temple as a student and had passed all his bar examinations except the final when war broke out.

He entered the Army as second lieutenant in the ASC for which he was prepared by two years of work in that branch of the Service in the OTC, and had just received his certificate A. He was drafted to France in August 1914. In 1917 he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, and trained as an observer. His commanding officer writes: "We were all so fond of your son and he was doing so well. Quiet and self-contained, he had the art of making friends, and Wilson had such faith in him that he would not go up with anyone else."

There is a death notice, with head and shoulders portrait of Capt. John Sheridan Gregory in uniform, on page 15 of the Illustrated London News dated Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1918.

There is a letter of condolence, dated 28 February 1918, written by the chaplain who oversaw his funeral to Gregory M Gregory: "It was my sad duty to read the burial service over the remains of your gallant son, Capt. JS Gregory. Please accept my deepest sympathy in your great loss. I witnessed the wonderful manner in which he brought down his machine, which we had hoped would have resulted in a safe

landing, but unfortunately such was not the case. His body is buried near his machine and I will see that the grave is suitably marked. We owe much to the bravery and endurance of our splendid airmen, who in this sector have kept the Germans under control. My address is '48 Inf Bde HQ BEF'. May the God of all comfort be with you and yours, in this time of sorrow, and may the precious memory of your loved one render less the sense of loss, and increase that hope of meeting those who have been taken from us for a 'little while'. 'For friends above, for friends still left below, for rare links invisible between, for every precious thought and word and deed, we thank thee Lord'. Believe me, yours faithfully, Richard Bird SC7 C/E."

His grave was west of Lempire, NE Peronne but he was re-interred in Epehy Wood Farm British Cemetery, Plot 5, Row D, grave 14.

We retain his wallet which contained a photograph of a girl with Nazanin written on the back.

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