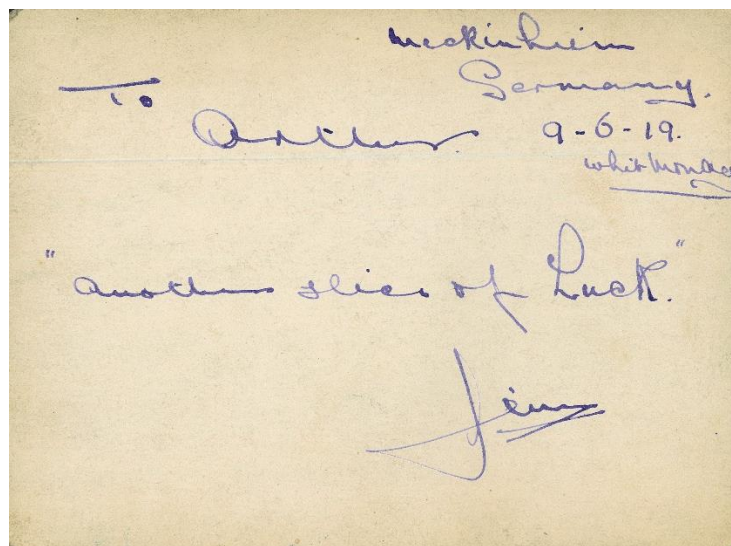


James Haselden Crash 9 June 1919

The image below shows the crash of a Bristol F2b Fighter of 11 Squadron:



The image has the following inscription on the reverse:



The card reads:

Meckinheim [Sp]
Germany
9-6-19 Whit Monday

To Arthur,
"Another slice of Luck."

Jim

The "Jim" who wrote the card is almost certainly James Gamble, the pilot who was flying the aircraft when it crashed. Jim Gamble's logbook records a flight on 9 June 1919 with Sgt Ball as the observer. Jim and Sgt Ball had flown Bristol F2b Fighter E2602 from Spich Airfield, Germany, to Nivelles Airfield, Belgium, on 7 June 1919. Two days later, they were returning to Spich when the engine started mis-firing and then cut out completely. Jim performed a forced-landing in a wheat field near Mechenheim. The aircraft turned over, Jim noting that he stayed with the 51st Welsh Regiment. Writing in his logbook, Jim noted that he hurt his back and "limping like a man of 120. Rather laughable."

Another photograph of the event shows the serial number of the crashed aircraft confirming it as the same airframe recorded in Jim Gamble's logbook:



Another image, with a note on the reverse, confirms that the 51st Welsh Regiment was assigned to guard the wreck while the RAF recovered it:



Mecklenburg
Germany
9.6.19.
"Salvage Party."
P.A.Y.
Quora Party
51st West Regt

One final image of the event appears to show Jim Gamble smiling to the centre-right of the photo:



The circled individual is wearing a Royal Flying Corps jacket and he has pilot's wings on his left chest:



The above photo of Jim Gamble was taken in 1915 shortly after he joined the Royal Flying Corps as an Aircraft Fitter. Jim was born in St.Helens, Lancashire, on 23 September 1894, the third child of William Gamble, a coal miner, and his wife Louisa Oakes.

Jim spent most of his service in the UK until he was selected for pilot training in November 1917. His older brother, George, had been killed the previous September in France just a few months after being commissioned from the ranks in the Rifle Brigade. Perhaps his brother's death influenced Jim to take a more active role in the war.

After completing flying training, Jim was posted to 11 Squadron in France, arriving there on 7 September 1918. He flew a number of operational missions, including two sorties in airframe E2602, before the

Armistice on 11 November. The image below shows James Gamble shortly after receiving his “wings” in 1917:



When Jim Gamble joined 11 Squadron, the unit was based at Le Quesnoy, France. The Squadron moved to Vert Galand on 19 September. As Allied forces pushed back the German Army, the Squadron advanced to Mory, France, on 15 October and then to Bethencourt, France, on 1 November. Shortly before the move to Mory, Jim had been flying a reconnaissance mission over Le Cateau when the engine of his Bristol F2b Fighter failed and he made a successful forced-landing on a trench line on the Allied side of the front-line. This first forced-landing with 11 Squadron was perhaps a first “slice of luck” indicated by his note to Arthur on the photo of the 9 June 1919 crash.

After the Armistice, 11 Squadron remained on the Continent, moving to Aulnoye, France, on 18 November before forming part of the British Occupation Forces and establishing itself at Spich, Germany, on 20 May 1919, which is where it was based at the time of Jim’s crash on 9 June. Jim was discharged at the end of July 1919. The rapid demobilization and reduction in forces left many pilots in the newly-formed Royal Air Force without a future. Jim remained in the reserves until 1923. He tried to remain in aviation, joining an ill-starred effort by the Handley Page company to establish regular passenger air routes in South Africa. When that venture folded, he returned to St. Helens where he worked as a mechanical engineer at Pilkingtons’ Glassworks until his retirement. He died on 7 July 1961.