

Account of the death of Edward Tiarks



Edward Tiarks (left) was 24 when he died in an aircraft accident at Hambrook, Somerset on 23 September 1929.

Edward was the second son of Frank Tiarks, a partner in J H Schroder & Co, and a director of the Bank of England. Edward had recently purchased the aircraft in which he died, a De Havilland two-seater Moth, fitted with a Gipsy engine, and he was an enthusiastic pilot, often flying between Chislehurst and Filton, where the aircraft was mainly kept. He was regarded by fellow members of the Wessex Aeroplane Club to be one of the best amateur pilots among them, and had done a considerable amount of flying at weekends. His family had a home at Loxton, to the south of Bristol.

He was great friends with 26 year old Edward Somerset (right), a cousin of the Duke of Beaufort, and a Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards. Both men were in the two-seater aircraft when it crashed.



The aircraft took off from a field near Priddy in Somerset at about 3.30 on the afternoon of 23 September 1929. Captain Ernest Bartlett of the Wessex Aeroplane Club said that it was the intention to fly around a little, and then land at nearby Filton, north of Bristol, to enable Lieutenant Somerset to catch a train to London. Tiarks was in the rear seat, and Somerset in front, but since it was a dual control type, it is not possible to know who was in control at the time of the accident.

The aircraft was seen flying at low level towards Filton, and eye-witnesses to the crash commented that apart from the low altitude, there was nothing initially to indicate that there was a problem with the aircraft. It then passed over a goods train, missing it 'by the barest of margins', before rising slowly, and then suddenly making a nose-dive.

The aircraft hit the ground with considerable force, and there was a deafening explosion, caused most probably by the petrol tank, resulting in the aircraft bouncing up to fall again. Dust rose from the explosion to a height of 100 ft, and wreckage from the aircraft was scattered in all directions over a wide area.



Both men were thrown clear of the aircraft to a distance of 60 yards from the point of the explosion, landing within a few feet of each other. Somerset died instantaneously, and Tiarks within a few minutes of the explosion.

The crash was witnessed by farm workers and others, and within minutes there was a considerable crowd of people. A doctor arrived within 10 minutes of being called, but there was nothing that could be done to help the two men. Their bodies were taken from the scene to the White Horse Inn at Hambrook, where Captain Bartlett formally identified the bodies.

(Information from the Bristol Evening Times 24 September 1929)