

The Tragic Tale of Assistant Paymaster Parker, RN

by Philip Jarrett, Honorary Companion, RAeS

In April 2017 I was able to add a unique item to my collection, in the form of a large ledger which had been used as a personal flight log book by an early naval aviator based at the Eastchurch Naval Flying School of the Royal Flying Corps' Naval Wing on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent in 1913, tracing his flying experiences from his initial training to flights as a qualified pilot. The man in question was Assistant Paymaster Edward Bertram Parker, RN, who had died in 1926. His logbook then passed into the possession of one of his daughters, who had retained it until she left it in her will to a lady who cleaned her house, and she eventually decided to sell it. Fortunately, the dealer she approached to find a buyer on her behalf contacted me.

Upon perusing this fascinating document, my curiosity was aroused when Parker's entries suddenly ceased for no apparent reason. The subsequent research unearthed a very sad tale of the tragic circumstances that ended the flying career of a young aviator who was showing great promise.

At the time, Eastchurch was not only the site of the Naval Flying School. It was also the location of the Short Brothers' aeroplane factory and the Royal Aero Club's Flying Grounds. The Naval Wing had a close relationship with Short Brothers, and the manufacturer supplied the Wing with many of its aircraft. As this account will reveal, this link was to become significant for Parker.

Background

Edward Bertram Parker was born in Portsmouth on 28 November 1884, and his address is given on his service record as Mrs K. Hallows, 22 Wellington Road, Dublin. He entered Royal Navy service 15 July 1902, aged 17, and passed for Clerk 2nd Class on 15 July 1903. On 15 January 1905 Parker passed his Intermediate Exam, 1st Class, and on 28 November 1905 he passed for Paymaster, 1st Class. On 29 December 1905 the Admiralty announced that Parker had been promoted to the rank of Assistant Paymaster in His Majesty's Fleet, dated from 28 November 1905, and he was recorded as Paymaster on 28 November 1909. Parker's list of postings was as follows: HMS *Vivid*, Assistant Clerk, 15 July 1902; discharged July 1902. HMS *Revenge*, Assistant Clerk, July 1902 to 18 February 1903. HMS *Russell* additional for disposal, Assistant Clerk, 19 February 1903. HMS *Queen*, Assistant Clerk, 7 April 1904; discharged from *Russell* and *Queen* 7 May 1906. HMS *Sapphire* additional Assistant Paymaster 31 May 1906 to March 1907. HMS *Attentive* additional secretary to Cdre Bayly, March 1907



The portrait of Assistant Paymaster Edward Bertram Parker that was used for his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate.

:Royal Aero Club archives at the RAF Museum

to 26 November 1908.

HMS *Terpischore* War College; additional Secretary to Cdre Lewis Bayley [sic], 27 November 1908 to 24 February 1911 (*physically strong and recommended for advancement by Capt [sic] L. Bayley [sic], November 1909*).

HMS *Neptune* additional secretary's Clerk to Admiral Bridgeman, 25 March – 4 December 1911. '*Physically Strong*. In December 1911 Admiral Bridgeman remarks that Parker was: *VGL. VG. VG. Zealous & painstaking, G Physically*.

HMS *President* additional for service at Admiralty as Assistant Paymaster, 9 December 1911 – 3 January 1913*. (Sick at Haslar 19 June 1911; appendicitis. Readmitted Haslar 13 September 1911, fit 11 October 1911).

*Applicant for Royal Flying Corps 25 October 1912.

HMS *Actaeon* additional for Aviation 3 January 1913 – 16 April 1913. Course at Eastchurch. *Actaeon* additional as Flying Officer, 17 April 1913. (*Flight 3*

May 1913, p.476 col 1.)

Under the Admiralty appointments announced in *The Aeroplane* for 9 January 1913 (p.34 col.1) the following appeared: *Assistant Paymaster E.B. Parker (of the President) will join the [Royal Naval Aviation School at Eastchurch] for an aviation course, to qualify [him] for admission to the Royal A map showing Eastchurch Aerodrome and its environs, plus distances to other flying grounds, from The Royal Aero Club Year Book for 1914.*

:Philip Jarrett

