



James Ernest Yeomans

53 Park Grove

When James joined up, aged 36, he was living with his wife Minnie and three young sons (Horace, Wilfred and Leonard) at 58 King Street. In May 1916 conscription for married men began. As a self-employed upholsterer and furniture dealer he may have been reluctant to join up as his business and family would have depended on income from his work. Families did receive a “Separation Allowance” but often this took time to come through. The allowance consisted of a portion of a soldier’s pay which was matched by the government. With three small children, Mrs Yeomans received about 23 shillings per week – that’s worth about £89 today.

By training Ernest was an upholsterer, and it is probably this skill that meant he was assigned to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Although we are not sure of the details of where he served it is likely that he was a “rigger” – part of a ground crew who worked on the body of the aircraft. Many riggers had previous experience in woodwork, wiring and upholstery – all essential skills when working with canvas and wooden aircraft held together with wires. The riggers worked alongside the fitters who were responsible for the engines, guns and other mechanisms.

He may never have served abroad as some teams spent their time preparing squadrons

ready for deployment to France.



Air mechanics working on reconnaissance aircraft at the aircraft repair depot near Rang du Fliers, Northern France, July 1918. The canvas covering stretched over the framework of the aircraft can be clearly seen. © IWM (Q11963)

The Royal Flying Corps was part of the British Army until 1 April 1918, when it amalgamated with the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force.

In March 1919 James was transferred to the RAF reserve, and was fully discharged in April 1920. The Yeomans family must have moved to Park Grove after James enlisted in 1916 and by 1922 they had left the area.

James died in 1946 whilst living at 22 Kingsley Road in Allestree. Members of the Yeomans family continued to live in the Derby area until the 1980s and we would be interested to hear from any relatives.