

Lionel and Mosley Woodhouse

brothers who served in the RFC/RAF and the RNAS



21 year old Capt Lionel Mostyn Woodhouse, MC, DFC, 52 and 59 Squadron RFC/RAF.
:via D.W. Empson



18 year old FSL Mosley Gordon Woodhouse, 9N Squadron.
:via D. W. Empson

by John Barfoot and Ken Feline

What did Lieutenant Lionel Woodhouse of the Royal Flying Corps talk about with his younger brother Mosley, recently arrived in France as a Flight Sub Lieutenant, replacement scout pilot with 9N Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service?

On that warm summer evening in July 1917, did they talk shop? Lionel, a veteran pilot with 52, a Corps Reconnaissance Squadron, had served on the Western Front since November 1916 and survived 'Bloody April'. Would 20 year old Lionel offer advice and caution to his 18 year old brother, or did they talk of happier days at home in Essex with the family?

Their father, Lionel Woodhouse JP of Chester, was born in 1866; he later became a successful wine merchant and with his wife Frances, moved South to Broomfield in Essex. It was at Broomfield on 10 December 1896 that their first child Lionel Mostyn Woodhouse had been born.

Mosley Gordon Woodhouse their second child arrived on 26 October 1898 and as the family business with vineyards at Marsala in Sicily flourished, so did the Woodhouse family, with the addition of John Herbert, born 1900 and Peter Leigh born 1906.

Three daughters Barbara, Pauline and Nancy, completed the family, who moved to a larger house east of Chelmsford that is still known today as 'Torts', in the village of Little Baddow.

As befitting the eldest son at that period, Lionel, known as

'Lio' in the family circle, was first to leave home, entering Eton via boarding school in Broadstairs. Two years his junior, Mosley known as 'Mole' entered Radley College, Berkshire in 1913.

The third son John was just 12 years old when he was sent to the Royal Naval College for two years, prior to his entrance to Dartmouth College in 1914.

When Britain went to war on 4 August 1914, Lionel was a cadet in the Eton Officer Training Corps. He would be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Essex Yeomanry on Thursday 1 July 1915, six months after his 18th birthday.

Early the following year Lionel applied for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps, as it was obvious to many cavalry and mounted infantry regiments that the Western Front had stagnated into trench warfare. Lionel's request was granted on 18 June 1916. Due no doubt to his own talent, and the sparse training available at that period of the war, Lionel progressed through technical and flight instruction, to be appointed Flying Officer in less than two months.

To 52 Squadron

52 Squadron based at Hounslow had been formed three months earlier, and was in the process of working up as a Corps Reconnaissance unit for the BEF in France, when Lionel reported for duty on Wednesday 16 August.

During October, 52 Squadron's BE2c and BE12 machines