

Peter Quentin Reiss

Hermitage Hall, Holmes Chapel

Returned

Peter Reiss (1897-1978) – (left) a keen angler, and (right) a Spad fighter such as he flew in the Royal Flying Corps and the brand new Royal Air Force



His Story

Peter Quentin Reiss ("PQR") was born on 3rd July 1897 the fifth child of Henry and Constance Reiss of the Hermitage – Quentin is from the Latin for "fifth".

He followed his elder brothers to Charterhouse School, Surrey, where he was in the top teams for several sports, but disliked the restrictions imposed.

After the war he built a career as a Lloyds broker, specialising with great success in the up and coming field of aviation insurance.

In the 1930's he was a well-known aviator taking part in competitions to open up new air routes around the world. In 1933 he won the Oasis Trophy. He flew long trips and was good friends with Amy Johnson. He survived a number of accidents, including one in Jaipur India in 1937 when his co-pilot P. Randolph was killed. His Hornet Moth plane was bequeathed to the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden.

In sport he was an excellent golfer, a keen angler, and a top-ranked squash player. He died in 1978.

His War Record

On the outbreak of war he left school aged just 17 for officer training as a "gentleman cadet" at Sandhurst. He was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant(Lancashire Fusiliers) in March 1915 but could not go to fight until he was 18. In 1916 was sent to France for the battle of the Somme. In his private memoirs he wrote as follows

"We young officers were well-drilled in how to lead a platoon over the top. We were told there would be little opposition... and our divisional commander General de Lyle addressed us and said he was going to ride his horse across no man's land..... we got just nowhere and nowhere fast... I got about half way to the German lines and having stopped three machine gun bullets dropped into the nearest shell hole. The wounds were not all that bad but I lost quite a bit of blood."

After several months in hospital he decided to swap trench life for the even greater risks of flying – although a pilot's life expectancy was just a few weeks, but "*at least they could eat, sleep and change their clothes*". He joined the Royal Flying Corps, and was thrilled by flying. He went on to train new pilots.