

Lt. D.R. Tullis No 14 (N) Squadron and No 214 Sqn. RAF

Lt. David Ronald Tullis was born on 24th September 1899 in Partick, Glasgow, Scotland.



Ronald Tullis joined the RNAS on 13th May 1917. At the time he was a student at Glasgow Technical College. His service record described him as an Analytical Chemist involved in metallurgical analysis and chemical research work. He was granted a Temporary Commission as a Probationary Flight Officer. In July he was posted to Crystal Palace. According to his service record available online from the National Archives in Kew he then went to Redcar in North East England on the 30th June 1917. He spent just over two months at Redcar before being posted to the Cranwell Central Depot and Training Establishment on the 8th September 1917. Donald Tullis completed his flying examination at Cranwell on the 17th October 1917, being graded a 'Good pilot'. He was then promoted to Flt Sub Lt on the same day. He may have previously gone solo at Redcar but the 17th October looks like the date he formally completed his training.

The results of his Graduation Examination dated 17th October are found in the National Archive at Kew. ADM/273/13/58 'Results of Graduation Examination; Flying Ability 2nd Class, Aerial engines 66.25%, Navigation 62.8% Gunnery 60%, W, T (Wireless and Telegraphy) and Photography 60%.'

Tullis was appointed a Temporary Flight Sub Lieutenant on the 17th November 1917. On 3rd November he was posted to Manston for training on Handley Page 0/100s. His service record refers to a confidential report from Manston dated 1st January 1918 in which he is described as 'V. G. Pilot. G. Officer'. Two weeks later Ronald Tullis was posted to B flight of No 7 (N) Squadron at Coudekerque Dunkirk.

At some time, possibly after Manston, and before being posted overseas, he went to Freiston in Lincolnshire. A photograph in his album is labelled '*At Freiston*' this shows a group of seven RNAS pilots photographed on a snow covered airfield. The pilots are wearing their fur lined guantlets so it must have been cold and taken in late 1917 or early 1918.

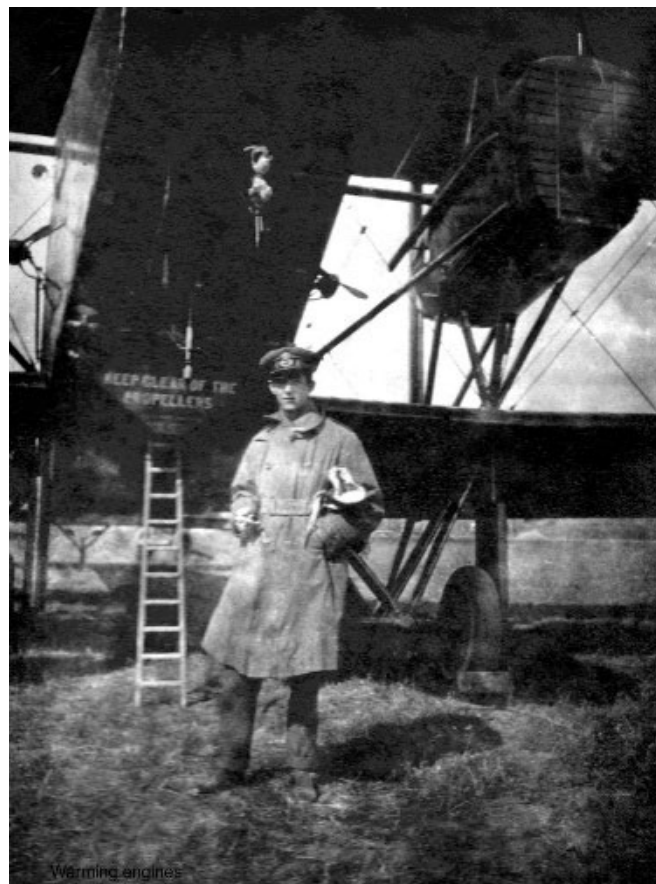


Image from Page 10 of D. R. Tullis's Photo Album. Used by kind permission of his son Brian Tullis

During his training Ronald Tullis had flown the following aircraft: MF Maurice Farman, Avro (Probably 504), B.E.2c, B.E.2e, Sop 13 (Sopwith 1913? Seaplane design), Sopwith Pup, Handley Page (0/100) and Bristol Scout. Ronald Tullis's, aerial gunnery was graded as VG 1 (Very Good?)

Tullis was posted to France on the 14th January 1918. Tullis was to be at Coudekerque near Dunkirk until the end of June. Ronald Tullis was promoted to Lieutenant on the 1st April 1918, when the RNAS and RFC combined to form the Royal Air Force. When No 207 Squadron returned to England in June to re-equip with HP 0/400s he was transferred to No 214 Squadron.

Like all of No. 214 Squadron crews Ronald Tullis was a regular visitor to the target zone formed by the Bruges-Ostende-Zeebrugge Triangle. From January he flew many missions. He flew as a pilot during the summer months and his name appears frequently on bombing reports and Raid Orders.

On a mission to bomb German coastal batteries near Ostende on the night of the 9th-10th May 1918 Tullis was acting as Air Gunner in the rear cockpit of HP/100 3150. He was lucky to escape uninjured when it crash landed in heavy fog *'This machine crashed badly on landing near St Omer after the raid. Pilot and observer injured'*.

Nine Handley Pages of No. 214 Squadron flew on raids on the night of the 5th June. Lt. Tullis was pilot on this particular mission.

214 Squadron, R.A.F.		RAID ORDERS			5th. June 1918	
<u>MACHINE.</u>	<u>PILOT.</u>	<u>OBSERVER.</u>	<u>GUNLAYER.</u>	<u>LOAD.</u>		
HP.9644	Capt. Studd	Sergt. Dell	Lt. Fraser.	3/550	11	
HP.3126	Lt. McCormick	Corpl. Hove	1/Pte. Williamson	14/112	11	
HP.3438	Lt. Lewtas	Corpl. Wardrop.	1/Pte. Thomas	16/112	11	
HP.3439	Lt. Gosgrave	Sergt. Kimberley	1/Pte. Bones	16/112	11	
HP.9645	Lt. Ellison	S/Lt. Porter	1/AM. Wingrove	4/250	11	
				6/112	11	
HP.9648	Lt. Vance	Corpl. Conley	1/Pte. Mitchell	16/112	11	
HP.3402	Lt. Tullis	Corpl. Whittaker	2/Pte. Silvester	15/112	11	
HP.3402	Lt. McIlraith	Corpl. Parker	Lt. Nichol	16/112	11	
HP.3126	Lt. Russell	S/Lt. Young	Corpl. Barber	3/550	11	

Copy of 214 Squadron Raid Order 5th June 1918 Ref: Leeds University. Liddle Collection/ Air/ LA Dell

On 17th July 1918 Tullis had a lucky escape when HP 0/400 C9646 that he was piloting crashed on take-off at St Inglevert aerodrome. There were two other crew with him, Lt Reginald Binckes was in the observer seat and Ensign Maury Stocker, a pilot in the US Navy, was in the rear cockpit. C9646 started its take-off run but failed to leave the ground properly and crashed nose first, completely destroying the front cockpits of the plane.

Ronald Tullis's made notes in his war time photo album describing what happened. *'The end of the famous C9646. A marvellous escape from death. 17th July 1918, While taking off uphill from St Inglevert the wheel hubs became entangled in flax. The machine failed to rise properly and struck the ground under full power at 65 miles per hour. My companion, Lt R. Binckes and I were thrown 30 feet.'*



Photograph of C9646 after the 17th July 1918 crash. From D.R. Tullis's photo album. By permission of Brian Tullis

Both Tullis and Binckes were catapulted 30 feet out of the front cockpits. Tullis walked away without a scratch but Binckes broke his spine and died on the 21st of July. He had been at the Squadron for only 5 weeks before his death. Tullis was only 18 years old at the time of the crash. Despite his apparent youth, Ronald Tullis was already an experienced pilot who had been at the squadron some time. At the time of the crash he had been on active service for six months.

In late September 1918 Ronald Tullis was transferred from No 214 Squadron. It appears that he was either wounded or had become ill, possibly a victim of the Spanish Influenza epidemic that claimed so many lives in 1918. On the 23rd September he proceeded to **MD Hampstead**, probably a hospital in North London. He was on medical leave for two months. Ronald Tullis was assessed by a medical board at the start of November, on the 5th November his service record AIR/76/514/101 noted '**RAF MB** (Medical Board?) **'Fit H S** (Home Service?) **8 weeks flying duties'**.

On the 27th November Ronald Tullis's sick leave finished. By this time the war was over and he was not posted back to No 214 Squadron. He was to remain in the RAF for two more months. He was posted to 1st Communication Squadron. This was formed at Hendon to provide rapid transport between London and Paris in connection with the Versailles Peace Conference. Additional squadrons were subsequently formed at Buc aerodrome, near Versailles, and briefly at Hounslow.

On the 26th January 1919 he was demobbed to return to Scotland and his studies. His service record describes this in harsh official language as '**transferred to the unemployed list'**. His discharge from the RAF was posted in the London Gazette on the 1st April 1919. Ronald Tullis became a metallurgist and he died on 16th May 1964.