

The Duprés – Père, Frère et Fils

Introduction: Not infrequently, the act of carrying out research into the military career of an individual can often spill over into undertaking genealogical research into that person's entire family, and so it proved with George Luce Dupré Junior as we will call him. It was also necessary, because, from the initial research and incorrect assumptions, I had inadvertently included the career of his father, George Luce Dupré Senior, as part of his, even though family accounts suggested that they both served. In my defence, I had thought that George Senior had been too old to join (he was approaching 43 in 1917) while the dates for key events were such that they could have been for one man only.

We shall look at three, very different, careers. Our *père* is obviously George Senior while George Junior is our *fils*. Harold Edgar, the brother of George Senior, completes the trio as *frère*.

Family Background: With the marriage of James Joslin Dupré (1848-1921) to Lydia Grace Vaumorel Luce (1849-1901), the Dupré family became involved in the perfumery business, selling a range of perfumes, not least Luce's *Eau de Cologne*, a widely recognised and highly regarded product, from their shop at 44, King Street in St Helier, Jersey. In due course, a bonded store would be opened in Southampton to despatch their products to overseas customers in far-off India, Africa and the Americas.

James and Lydia would have five children namely, Lydia Florence (b.1871), George Luce (b.1874), James Wilfred (b.1876), Harold Edgar (b.1884), and William Henry (b.1887). George, James and William would variously attend Victoria College in Jersey while Harold attended Leys School in Cambridge. George would later attend Chaptal College in Paris and was considered to be a fluent French speaker. As to their careers following schooling, it seems that the family perfumery business was theirs for the managing, and George Senior was certainly looking after the bonded store in Southampton where George Junior was born in 1896.

At some point later, it appears that George Senior left the family business for the motor trade, becoming a garage proprietor. Meanwhile, William would take up medicine, and during the War was a Surgeon-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, while James stayed at home and ran the business.

George Senior had married Kate Walker (1872-1948) in 1895, and along with George Junior who has been mentioned, there would be five girls Dulcie Lydia (b.1899), Marguerita Lucille (b.1901), Doreen (b.1905), Kathleen Edith (b.1907), and Grace Mainwaring (b.1910). There was another child who sadly died very young, but no details are available. George Junior attended Victoria College between 1903 and 1911, and then followed this with a year that was spent at Oxenford House School in St Lawrence, Jersey.

Curiously, while William Henry is recorded in Victoria College's Book of Remembrance as having served in the Great War, neither of the Georges is listed. However, we will now look at their service along with Harold's.

George Luce Dupré Senior: We first find George Senior attesting in Jersey on the 22nd June, 1915 and he is soon given the service number M2/114639 and becomes a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) to serve in its Motor Transport (MT) branch. At this time he is 40 years and 271 days old while he has previously served in the Jersey Militia's 2nd (East) Battalion.

Arriving at Grove Park the following day, he then served with 303 MT Company at Chatham and Marlborough, and then 381 MT Company at Southampton (a convenient posting perhaps?) respectively, until 22nd February, 1917, having soon been appointed to Acting Corporal and then to Acting Sergeant in May, 1916, before reverting to Acting Corporal in February, 1917 as he was surplus to his unit's establishment.

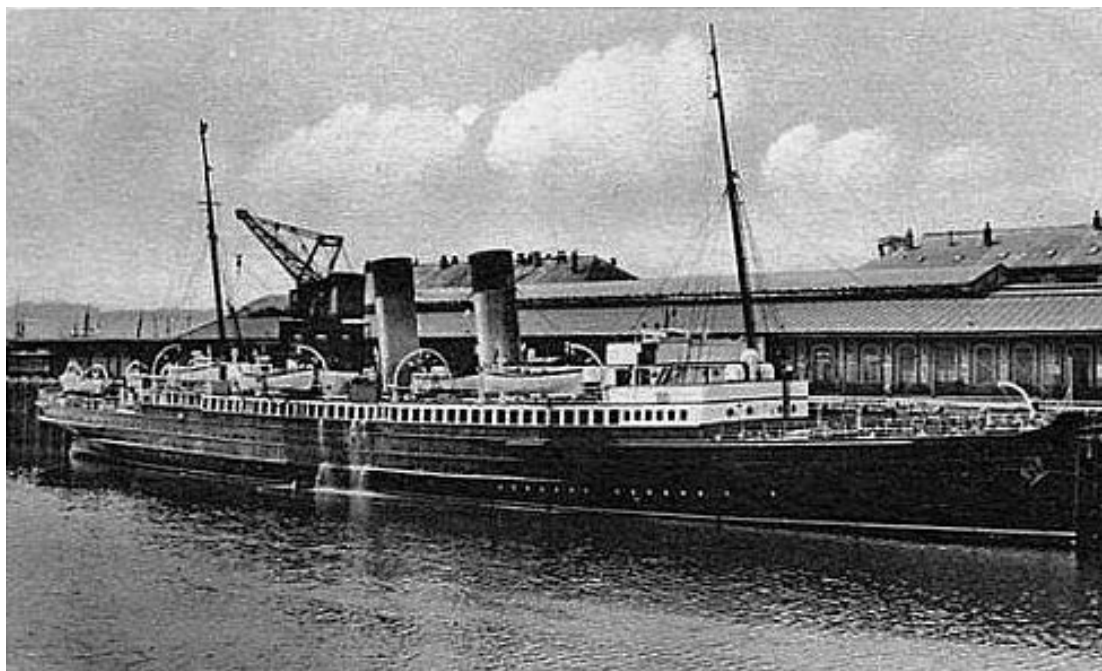
This was probably at around the time when his application for a commission was going the rounds of recommendation and approval, although it was not the first as he had originally applied in December, 1914. Had that application been rejected? Who knows, now he was taking a second bite at the cherry!



On the 1st July, 1917, George Senior was discharged from the Army. However, that was purely the standard administrative arrangement for men who were then being commissioned from the ranks, for he was appointed as a Temporary Second Lieutenant the following day as was stated in London Gazette (LG) 30189. Examining the list of some seventy plus men who were also commissioned into the RASC along with George Senior on the 2nd July, 1917, it is evident that they were all from the ranks, and that they had attended a short commissioning course at an Officer Cadet Battalion (OCB). At this stage, his papers show that his wife, Kate, and George Junior were nominated as joint NOK with their address given as living at Cape House, Samares in Jersey.

In the two years since first enlisting, George Senior had remained in England, and this state of affairs would continue for another year. Orders for a posting to the British Expeditionary Force in October, 1917 were cancelled, and George, now with 1114 MT Company, would languish in Bulford for another eleven months when he and his Company were sent to Mesopotamia in

September, 1918. Embarking on the HMAT 'Maid of Orleans' on the 26th of that month, he arrived at Bombay at the end of October, there changing ships and embarking on the HMAT 'Vasna' to arrive at Basra on the 6th November, 1918. Five days later the Armistice was signed!



HMAT 'Maid of Orleans' back in civilian use at Folkestone

George Senior remained in Mesopotamia for the next two years, primarily at Baghdad, during which time, according to LG 31803, he was promoted to Temporary Lieutenant on 1st February, 1919. On the 2nd December, 1921 he again embarked on HMAT 'Vasna' for Bombay and the return journey to Southampton on board HMAT 'Scotian'. Arriving in the UK on the 28th January, 1922 he passed through the Dispersal Unit and was demobilised the following day, and retaining the rank of Lieutenant in accordance with LG 32656. One presumes that he caught the next mail-boat from Southampton to Jersey and to see a family that he had been away from for more than three years.

Harold Edgar Dupré: In some respects, Harold's progress was similar to that of George Senior's in that he first joined as a Private with the regimental number 33152 in the Hampshire Regiment before being commissioned. His enlistment papers note that he was a Manufacturing Perfumer and that it was not a protected trade. But delving into his War Office file, one finds his route to receiving that Commission does appear to be circuitous. He attested on the 10th December, 1915 and was immediately put into the Army Reserve, one presumes to wait being called forward for training.

However, before that call came, he had taken himself off to Cambridge and had joined the University Officer Training Corps (UOTC) there as an Officer Cadet. In late May, 1916 he submitted his application for a Commission with the Territorial Force, but this was subsequently changed to a Temporary Commission in the Regular Army. Being accepted, the Hampshire Regiment

posted him to No 2 OCB which was located, conveniently for him, at Pembroke College in Cambridge. On the 26th April, 1917 he was commissioned into the Rifle Brigade, joining their 16th Battalion.

In becoming an officer it does appear that Harold made full use of the 'back door' route! A form on his military efficiency as a Cadet shows that he served a term only, and the statement 'Not Completed University Year' has the word 'University' struck out. Perhaps his earlier attendance at Leys School had been of help to him in joining the UOTC? But, there was method in the seeming madness. In February, 1916, a new system of officer training was introduced with OCBs being created. With this, entrants could only come from those who had served in the ranks or from those who served in an OTC. Not having been mobilised, Harold had sought the latter qualification.

Between June, 1917 and January, 1918, Harold served in France, and was wounded on the 22nd September, 1917. However, on the 4th January, 1918 it was recorded that he had joined the Tank Corps and had been posted to its 16th Battalion. The Battalion was the first Tank Corps Battalion not to be given an alphabetic identification (such as A Battalion), and was being created from new. Located at Bovington Camp, for most of that year the crews would learn how to operate their armoured charges. It was on the 9th September, 1918 that Harold again left for France, and, just under three weeks later, would find himself involved in the Battle of Cambrai-St Quentin.

Harold was in command of a tank in the vicinity of Gillemont Farm during the attack that took place on the 29th September, 1918 on the Hindenburg Line near St Quentin. In this action, the tank that he commanded was disabled, and he was taken prisoner and sent to Karlsruhe, before eventually being repatriated back to the United Kingdom via Hull two months later on the 29th November.

When repatriated, he was granted two months leave of absence, but during this was required to submit a report as to the events leading up to being taken prisoner. A Standing Committee of Enquiry, set up to assess such cases would determine whether his capture and that of his surviving crew members and the loss of his tank was attributable to any failing by him as an officer holding the King's Commission. The Committee consisted of three senior officers:

- Major-General LAE Price-Davies, VC, CB, CMG, DSO
- Brigadier-General CRJ Griffiths, CB, CMG, DSO
- Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel EL Challenor, CB, CMG, DSO

The following report, submitted on the 4th January, 1919 recounts the events of the previous:

'My Battalion was attached to the 38th Australian Battalion as part of the second wave of an attack carried out on 29th September, 1918.

In going forward to take up position with the 38th Australians I found [that] the first wave attack made by the Americans, had, apparently, failed, and as I came across some Americans in disorder, I tried to rally them and lead them forward with my tank.

I then lost my way in a thick mist and, on emerging from this later, was asked for assistance in reducing a strong point.

I then went forward and got right into the nest but unfortunately had the water jacket of the tank pierced with an anti-tank rifle bullet which drained the water from the radiator so that I could run the tank very little further.

At the same time another bullet apparently struck through in the rear somewhere setting up a thick smoke the origin of which we could not discover, which forced us to vacate the tank, taking with us two Hotchkiss guns.

We were then bombed with stick bombs and after two of the crew had been killed and the others wounded, we were surrounded by superior numbers and forced to surrender. Personally I was extremely lucky and only had a few splinters in my back.

HE Dupré'

On the 1st February, 1919, Harold Dupré relinquished his commission as a result of the reductions in the post-war British Army. Official notification that he was in no way to blame for his actions when taken prisoner the previous September was not sent out until the 17th July, 1919.

George Luce Dupré Junior: When opening War Office file (WO 339/38635) at the National Archive at Kew, one is immediately greeted by a memorandum slip, dated 21st March, 1917, containing the following words:

'This is a most extraordinary case. It might be desirable to have this officer invalided out to save disgrace. But he has already been dismissed. I think perhaps you would like to glance through the trial [papers]'

The WO file was clearly that for George Luce Dupré Junior.

But first, to recap on what has previously appeared, and to refresh a few points, George Junior was born in Southampton on the 30th September, 1896. Between 1903 and 1911, he had attended Victoria College, becoming a member of the OTC. A year at Oxenford House School followed. In October, 1914 he received a commission with Jersey's Militia where former OTC membership was cited, and then resigned that commission the following February (a common practice) to enter Sandhurst, and where he received a permanent commission with the 2nd Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment six months later on the 11th August, 1915. The next key date is the 20th April, 1917, when LG No 30028 was issued, announcing that George Junior had been dismissed the service on the 19th February, 1917, as the result of a

General Court Martial (GCM). The 'trial' referred to in the memorandum above was that GCM.

The WO file goes some way to answering what happened between the 11th August, 1915 when George Junior was commissioned in the British Army, and the LG entry of the 20th April, 1917. At the time of the commissioning, George Junior's future Battalion had been in France and Flanders for a year, and had particularly distinguished themselves at Gheluvelt the previous October, by preventing superior German forces breaking through to Ypres, an act for which Sir John French later stated: '*...on that day the 2nd Worcesters saved the British Empire*'. However, it does not appear that he went directly to the 2nd Battalion, and instead joined the Regiment's 6th (Reserve) Battalion which, with the 5th (Reserve) Battalion, was based at Plymouth at the time. After a period of leave, one may assume that he was to receive further training, some of it specialist such as attending a machine gun course, and would then be sent to a unit at the front along with a reinforcing draft of other ranks.

Unfortunately, misfortune struck. On the 25th September, a Saturday, George Junior was involved in a motor cycle accident at Exeter, and consequently, he suffered a compound fracture of the tarsal and metatarsal bones in his left foot. As a result, he would be admitted to the Military Hospital at Devonport, and subsequently hobble around, supported by crutches, for another three to four months. Joining a frontline unit was out of the question, for much of that early period he was also unfit for 'Home' duties, and in due course, he returned to Jersey on convalescence leave, being required to attend medical boards conducted by Colonel John Yourdi. Recovery was slow, but on the 19th April, 1916, he was at last declared fit for General Service.

He had been effectively laid up for more than six months, and his general fitness would have undoubtedly declined during this period, needing several more months to regain the level of fitness required of a young subaltern who would be sent to lead his men over the trench parapet. However, it is clear that he did go over to France as the paperwork related to the GCM indicates. Furthermore, it shows that at the time of the GCM, which actually took place on the 6th February, 1917, he was attached to No 9 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.

This now begs the question as to what was his role with the RFC? Had he become a Pilot? Or was he an Observer? Was he placed in charge of aircraft maintenance? The paperwork in his WO File gives no indication, and the RAF Record Form that would be completed more than a year later is constrained solely to a reference of his dismissal. There is a gap of ten months to explain and possibly another memorandum slip provides another clue.

This memorandum was written five days after the first, quoted above, and is a summary of key points from the transcript of the trial (sadly, not amongst the WO File papers), relating to George Junior's mental condition. It was clearly written in response to the first memorandum, and there is a suspicion that it was written by the Director-General of Army Medical Services (DGAMS) or one of his staff at the War Office, stating:

'Dismissed: *Absence without Leave. Accused was absent from his Squadron for 16 days, and was arrested at a place on the coast 300 miles distant.*

Defence: *Insanity. Accused pleads two accidents and 'Claustrophobia'.*

Witness: *RAMC No 1. [The witness] Says he [GLD] was incapable of understanding the nature of his act but he [the witness] qualifies this somewhat and limits himself to saying he [GLD] was 'unbalanced'.*

Witness: *RAMC No 2. [The witness] Thinks he [GLD] is 'feeble-minded'.*

Witness: *RAMC No 3. [The witness] Is less favourable.'*

In terms of the trial process, George Junior would not have been brought back one day, and then court-martialled the next, there would have been the need to allow him time to prepare a defence and for the RAMC doctors to assess his health. In fact, as a note on his file shows that the Army's bankers, Cox and Company, were advised that, through his absence, he was not entitled to pay during the period of the 9th to the 24th December, 1916, the 16 days cited above. Thus the gap is now reduced by two months to eight.



A BE2c, a type flown by 9 Squadron RFC

George Junior '*...pleads two accidents and 'Claustrophobia'.* Throughout the period from the 1st July to the 15th November, 1916, the Battle of the Somme raged. And, it was throughout this period that 9 Squadron RFC was employed on artillery spotting and reconnaissance tasks overhead, flying the BE2c. The BE2c was an inherently stable aircraft, ideal with its top speed of 72 mph, to undertake those vital tasks.

However, that stability became a considerable liability when the aircraft was attacked and was unable to manoeuvre as deftly as the opposing German aircraft. Not for nothing did it earn the soubriquet of 'Fokker Fodder' in 1916.

George Junior's plea would indicate that, with two crashes, he was on flying duties and it was very likely that he was a 'Flying Officer (Observer)' (although a LG entry to that effect cannot be found to confirm this). If it is accepted that he was an Observer, then Claustrophobia was a reasonable description of his medical state, given that the Observer's location was forward of the pilot, confined between the two wings with their struts and wires. This would be compounded by the fact that the engine (and probably the fuel tank) was immediately in front of him, and that there were no flying controls to hand in the event that the pilot became incapacitated. In such circumstances, one

might be tempted to suggest that going AWOL was not the action of an 'unbalanced' and 'feeble-minded' individual!

It is also interesting to consider the fact that he '...was arrested at a place on the coast 300 miles distant.' If his Squadron was located somewhere in the area around Arras or Béthune for argument's sake, that '300 miles distant' could have placed him on the North Brittany coast, and not too far from St Malo and the cross-channel mail-boat service via Jersey. In all of this, one might detect a strong desire to survive in the security of familiar surroundings and to be in control of one's fate.

As mentioned earlier, the GCM took place on the 6th February, 1917. George Junior was sent back from France, via Havre to Southampton, just over two weeks later, and it is presumed that he was in Jersey before the month was out. Meanwhile, the military machine clunked slowly along its merry way. The GCM transcripts were received at the War Office in mid-March and circulated to various senior officers including Major-General Sir Borlase EW Childs, the Director of Personal Services who was clearly not too happy about the GCM's findings.

JUDGE ADVOCATE-GENERAL'S OFFICE.
17th March, 1917.


PROCEEDINGS OF COURTS MARTIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE INSPECTION
OF THE ADJUTANT-GENERAL.

Name	Regiment	Offence	Sentence	Remarks
George Luce Dupre,	2 nd Bn. Worcester-shire attached to sq. Squadron Royal Flying Corps	Absenting himself without leave.	Dismissal	To see.

You please
 EPS
 for af
 War Office London etc.
 20.3.17

DGAMS
 I think you ought to see this case
 Borlase Childs
 23/3/17

Assuming that the facts stated in the defence are true, I should say the case is one of Claustrophobia - 23/3/17

F. James
 24/3/17
 200
 210


Someone, possibly the DGAMS, has made comments at the bottom left of the above form: 'Assuming that the facts stated in the defence are true, I should say the case is one of Claustrophobia.' Notwithstanding, disgrace was the outcome with HM King George V approving George Junior's dismissal on the memorandum submitted to the King on the 16th April, 1917. As a result, George was no longer an officer and was out of the Army. Well, not quite, for the Army had long arms!

Somebody in the War Office remembered the existence of Jersey's Military Service Act, and thanks to the interest that was shown, George Junior found himself compulsorily enlisted for the duration of the war on the 1st May, 1917. On that same day, he was on a boat to the UK and being sent to the Cheshire Regiment's Depot at Chester.

At that point, his subsequent military career in the British army becomes a mystery. His Officer's File is not going to be added to while his Medal Card has nothing on it save for a mysterious reference to Special List 6. There are no service papers for him as a private soldier. Yet, in December, 1922 the War Office responded to an enquiry from the Devonshire police giving the particulars of George Junior's service, including the dismissal. Was this unfinished business from the accident some seven years previously, or had he come to the police's attention much more recently? As we know, tragedy unfolded when George Junior's wife died, sometime after March, 1920, and in September, 1923 he boarded the SS Omar in London and headed off to Western Australia, never returning to Jersey. He appears to have enlisted and served in the Australian Army during the Second World War, but those service papers are yet to be digitised.



Two photographs of George Luce Dupré Junior
(Unfortunately, the uniforms in both cannot be explained from his records)

Finally: Looking at the careers of the three men, it is interesting to see how different their routes to gaining a commission were. While Harold's account of his capture is of historical interest also, it is George Junior's tale that fascinates, and it is hoped that the transcript of his GCM might be located at the National Archive along with War Diaries for 9 Squadron, RFC at a future

visit. One may get further insight to what had occurred, but one must feel sympathy for a young man who, once stuck in a cramped and smelly front cockpit, could do nothing but pray when the aircraft that he was in was about to hit the ground.