**Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths** was born in Birkenhead in 1896 and was brought up in the family home 47 Upton Road, Claughton. Cliff's parents were James and Sarah - James founded J Griffiths, Monumental Masons, Steeplejacks and Builders, based at the top of Bidston Avenue. Cliff attended **Birkenhead Institute**. Cliff gained a double first degree at Liverpool University. Cliff gained his pilot's licence in 1916, joined the Royal flying Corps, forces number 161204. He was under military flight instruction at Gosport on 23 March 1916. He flew many combat and aerial photography reconnaissance missions over enemy territory on The Somme in WWI in France. On 24 September 1916 he was ok after his aircraft 4857 FE2b was shot through with 2nd Lieutenant Robert Shirley Osmaston (spotter, aged 23, who was killed) between Millencourt and Albert while on offensive patrol on The Somme. On 4th December 1916 he was brought down near Beaumont Hamel (northwest of Amiens, France) by anti aircraft fire and landed 200 yards behind our front line trench with Lt R Affleck (ok) while flying in a Royal A/c Factory FE2b of No. 23 Sqn A5447 while on a Photographic Patrol.

A daredevil, he was reprimanded for flying under bridges on the River Tyne.

After the war he was a researcher at Christs College, Cambridge, and was one of the pioneers of aerial mapping using stereoscopic photography, co-writing a book 'Aerial Surveying By Rapid Methods' with Professor Sir Bennett Melvill Jones. He married his cousin, Mary (Molly) Adelaide Royden. He was appointed Armstrong Whitworth's first Chief Flying Instructor at Whitley Aerodrome, Coventry. Flying instructors acted as test pilots. On 20th October 1923, Cliff was test flying an A W Siskin 3 J6983 when it spun into the ground, and Cliff was killed. He is buried at Bidston Churchyard. Sadly, the gravestone is now horizontal.

Molly then emigrated to Canada, where she re-married and lived to reach 98.

These notes and photographs compiled by Alan Perry, as a tribute to Joseph Clifford Griffiths, who was his Great Uncle.



Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths, Royal Flying Corps. - The flash on his left forearm signifies "Wounded in Action"

# Flight Commander Griffiths.

## His Hairbreadth Escapes.

We reproduce a photo of Captain J. C. Griffiths, the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. James Griffiths, of Claughton. In Decembr, 1915, he obtained a commission in the R.F.C., and went to France in the following May at the age of 19. He has been engaged in numerous air fights, and has succeeded in bringing down several hostile aeroplanes. In September his observer was killed in a fight which took place seven miles over the German lines. The engine of his machine was severely damaged, and held out only long enough to enable Captain Griffiths to reach our lines. Early in December last Captain Griffiths was gazetted Flight Commander, having previously acted in that capacity. Shortly afterwards he was wounded whilst taking photographs of the German trenches from a low altitude. The machine was hit by anti-aircraft gun-fire. He succeeded in gliding back without engine power, but crashed to earth in a shell hole in front of our second line trenches. The intrepid young airman has lately had the rank of Captain conferred upon him. Captain Griffiths was educated at the Birkenhead Institute, and graduated for his



Captain J. C. GRIFFITHS.

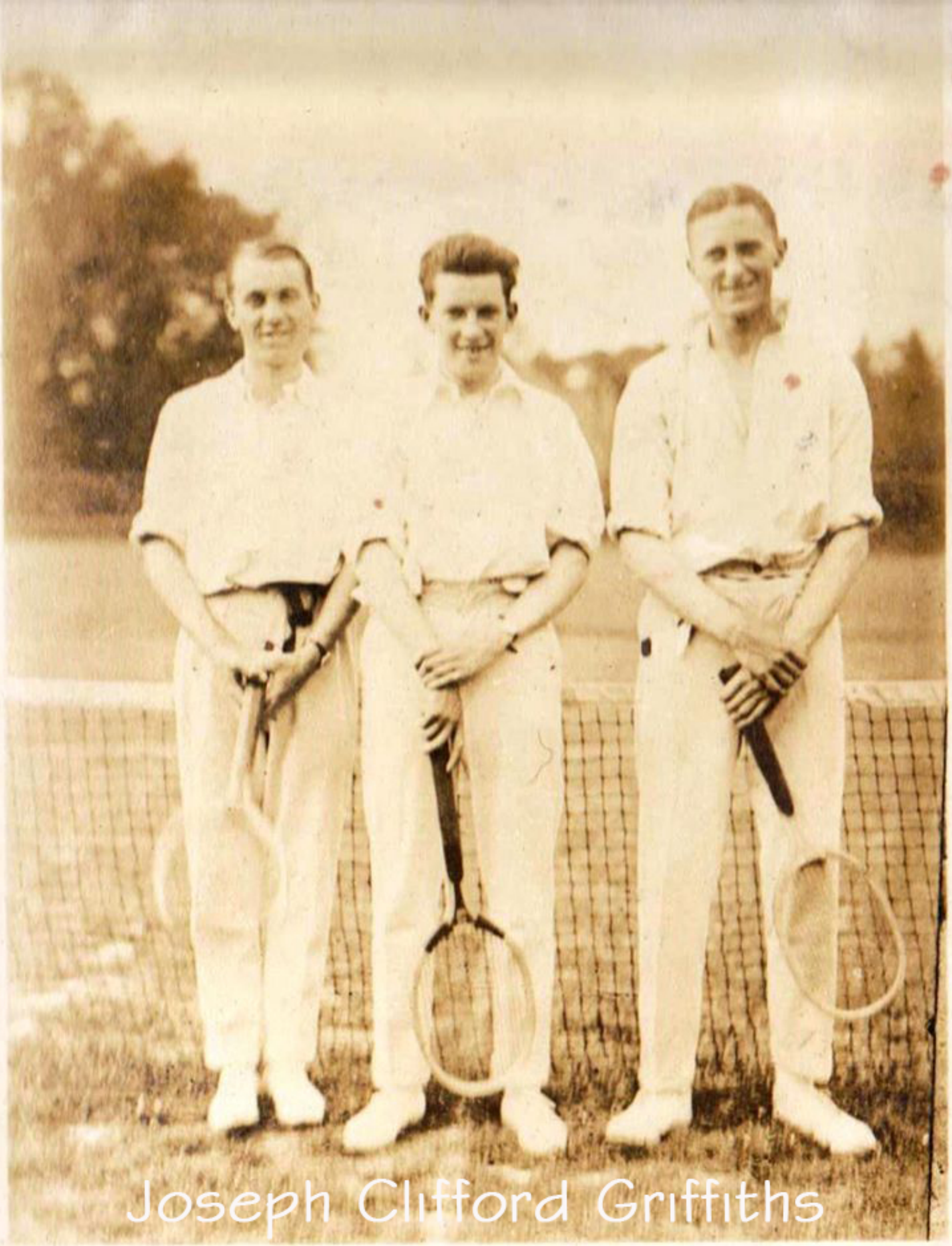
engineering degree at the Liverpool University. We congratulate Captain Griffiths on his rapid promotion, which his distinguished conduct richly merits.




Watson Bros

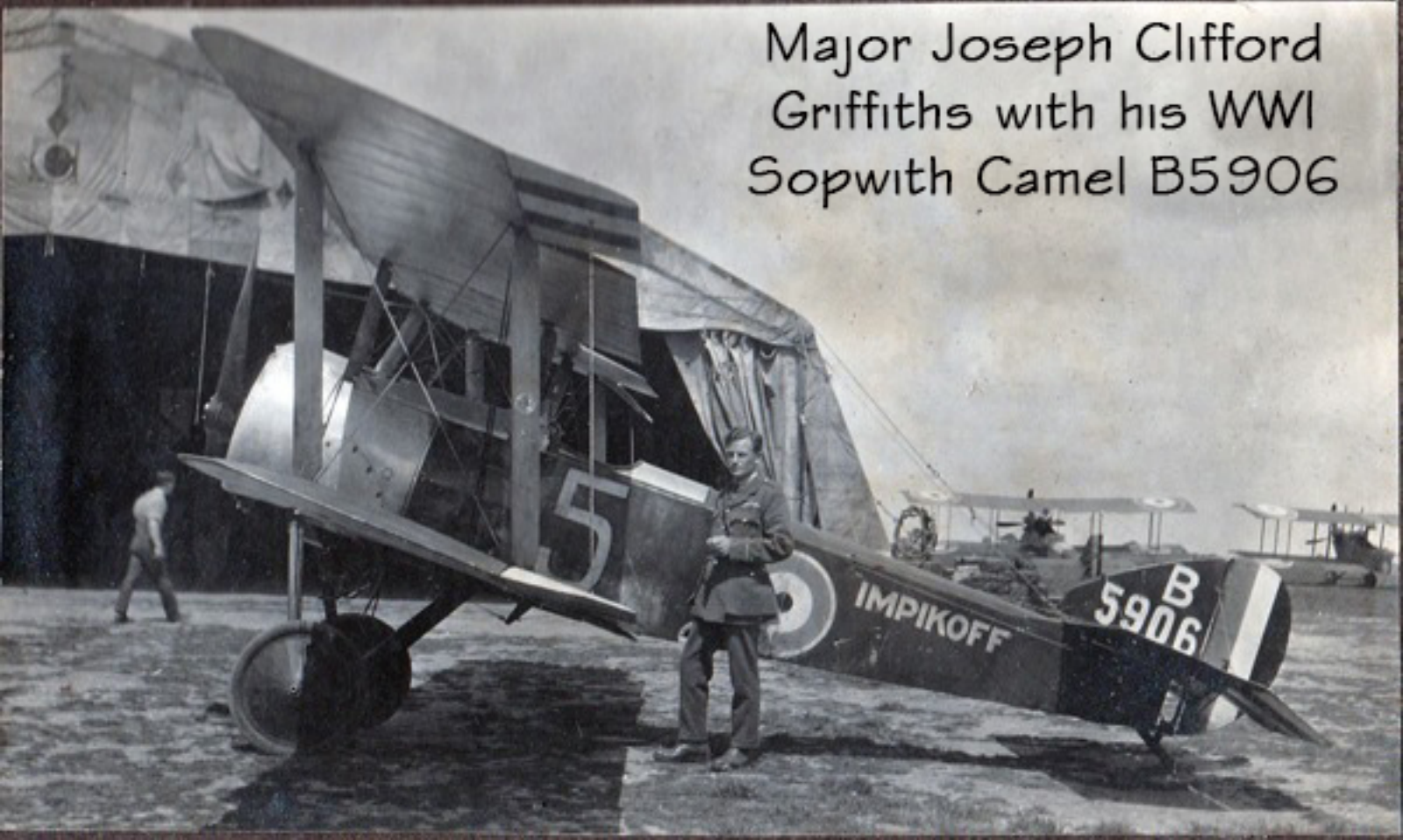
7, Moss St., Liverpool,
and
85, Argyle St., Birkenhead.


Joseph Clifford Griffiths


Joseph Clifford Griffiths


Joseph Clifford Griffiths
& sister Ivy Griffiths

Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths,
Royal Flying Corps


Major Joseph Clifford
Griffiths with his WWI
Sopwith Camel B5906
5
IMPIKOFF
B
5906



Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths,
Royal Flying Corps


Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths,
Royal Flying Corps



Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths,
Royal Flying Corps, with FE2B



A photograph of Top Brass in WWI, from the collection of Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths




AVRO 504K H2443. No. 2 Flying Training School, flying over Duxford Aerodrome around 1922 - taken by Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths




Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths -
left, Victory Medal
right, War Medal
top, Royal Life Saving Society
Bronze Medal
(It appears that he swam to
rescue someone that was in
difficulty)




Identification bracelet for Major (then Lieutenant)
Joseph Clifford Griffiths, Royal Flying Corps

2412

GRIFFITHS, Joseph Clifford

47, Upton Road, Claughton, Birkenhead.

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**Born** 11th Aug. 1896 **at** Birkenhead

**Nationality** British

**Rank, Regiment, Profession** 2nd Lieut. R.F.C.

**Certificate taken on** Maurice Farman Biplane

**At** Military School, Ruislip

**Date** 26th January 1916

Flying Certificate for
Major Joseph Clifford Griffith

# KILLED WHILE 'PLANE-TESTING.



Our picture shows Major J. C. Griffiths (age 27), son of Mr. James Griffiths, a former member of the Birkenhead Town Council, of 47, Upton-road, Birkenhead, who was killed on Saturday at Whitley Aerodrome, Coventry, while testing a machine. The late Major Griffiths (who became major when only 2[illegible] years of age, following service in France), had graduated B.Sc. at Liverpool University after leaving Birkenhead Institute, and at Cambridge took the degree of Master of Engineering. Some months ago he was appointed to the Siddeley-Armstrong Aerodrome at Whitley, near Coventry. He leaves a young widow.

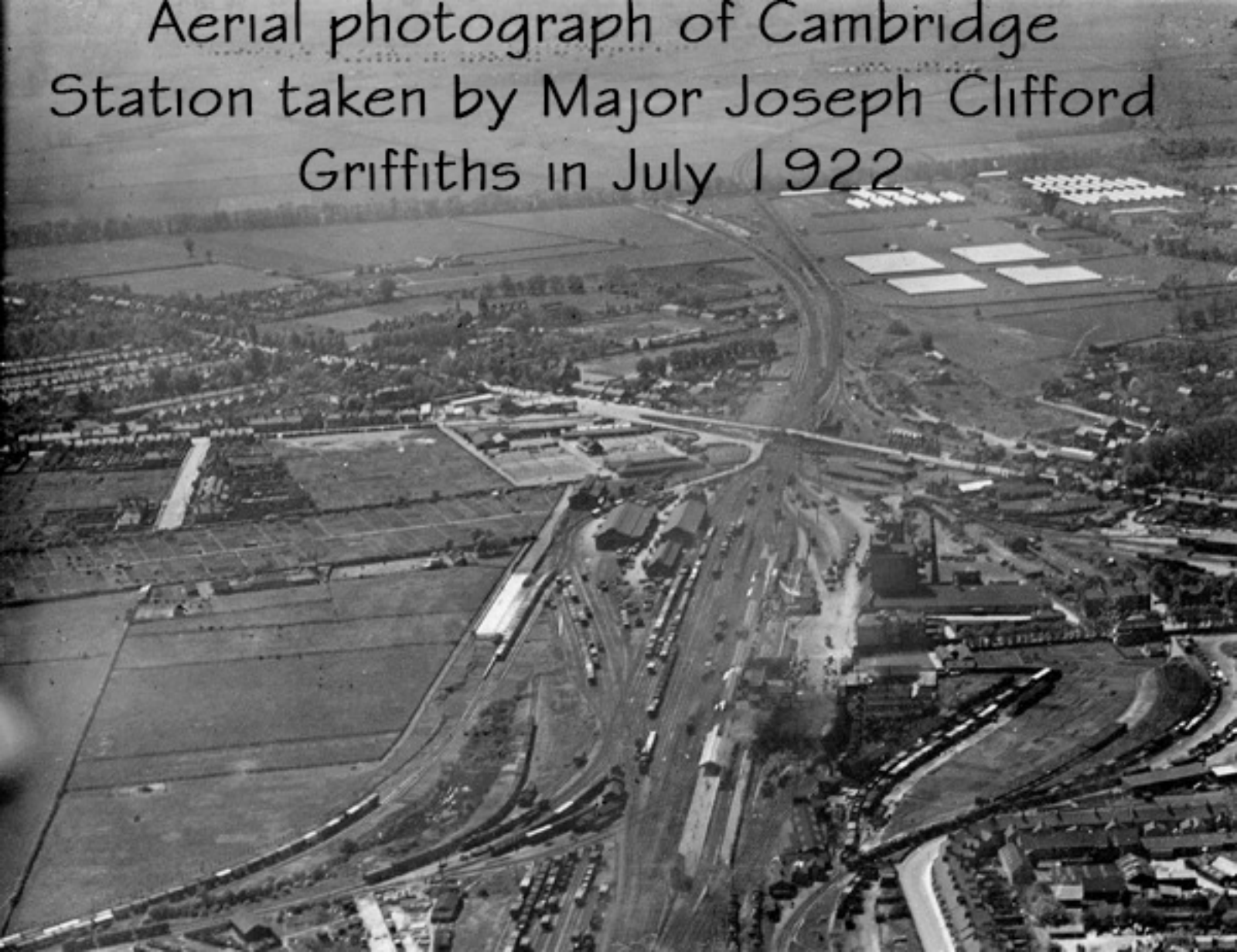
Newspaper report of the death of Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths

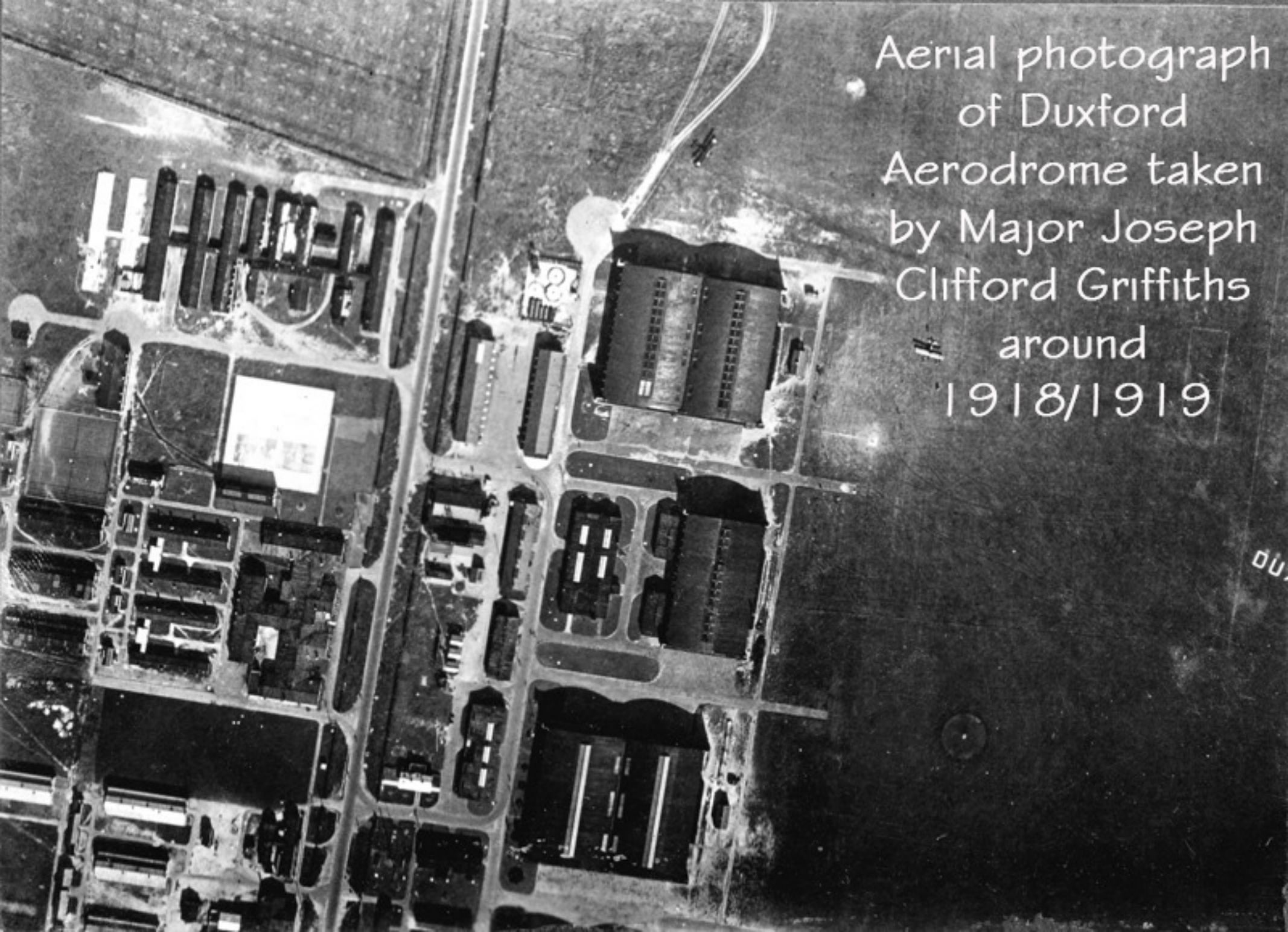


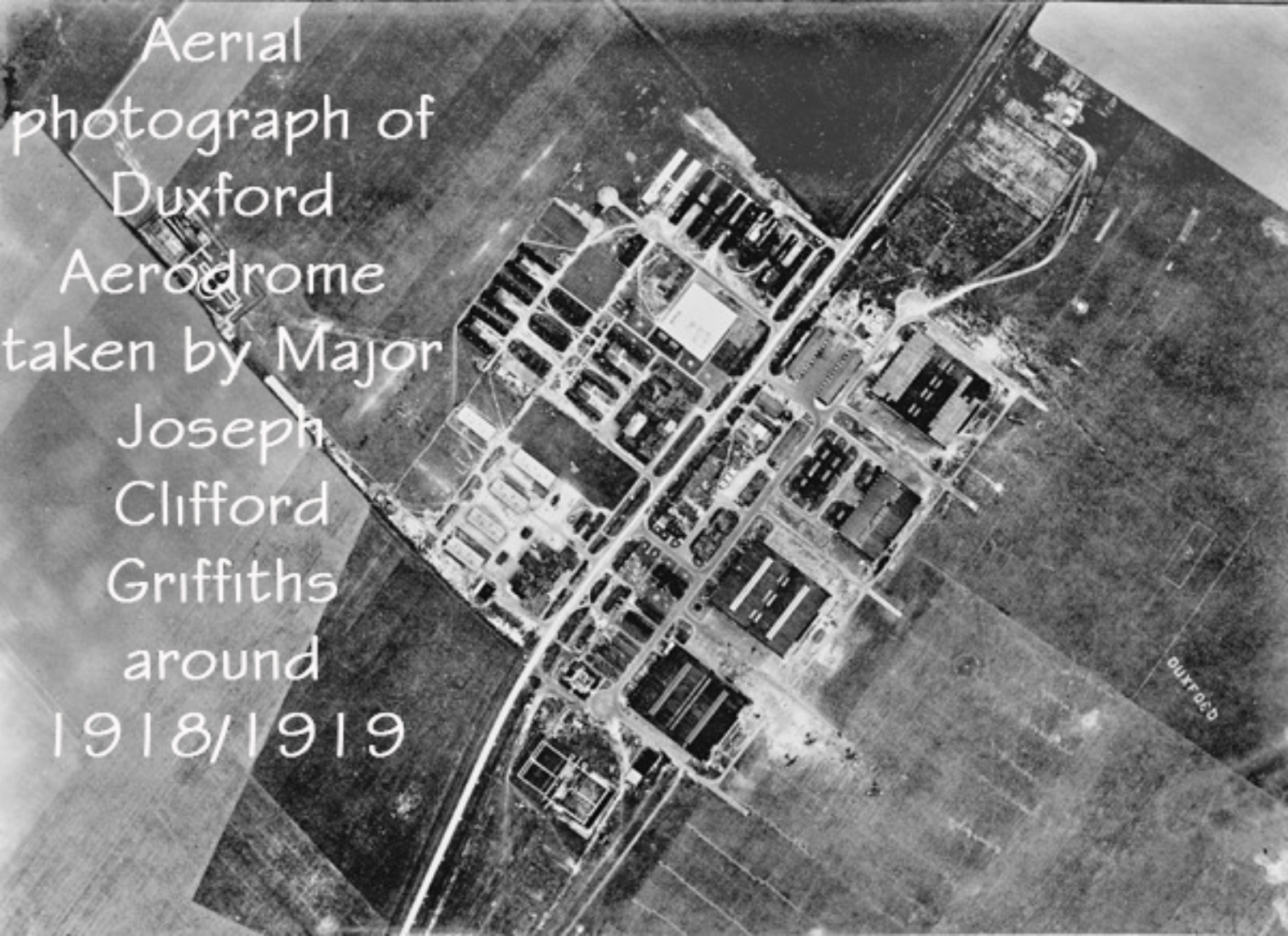

Griffith family memorial in Bidston Churchyard. Originally erected for Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths, the grave also included James Griffiths, the founder of J Griffiths, Monumental Masons, Steeplelacks and builders of Bidston Avenue, Claughton. This photo was taken around 1990 before the memorial was brought down for safety reasons.

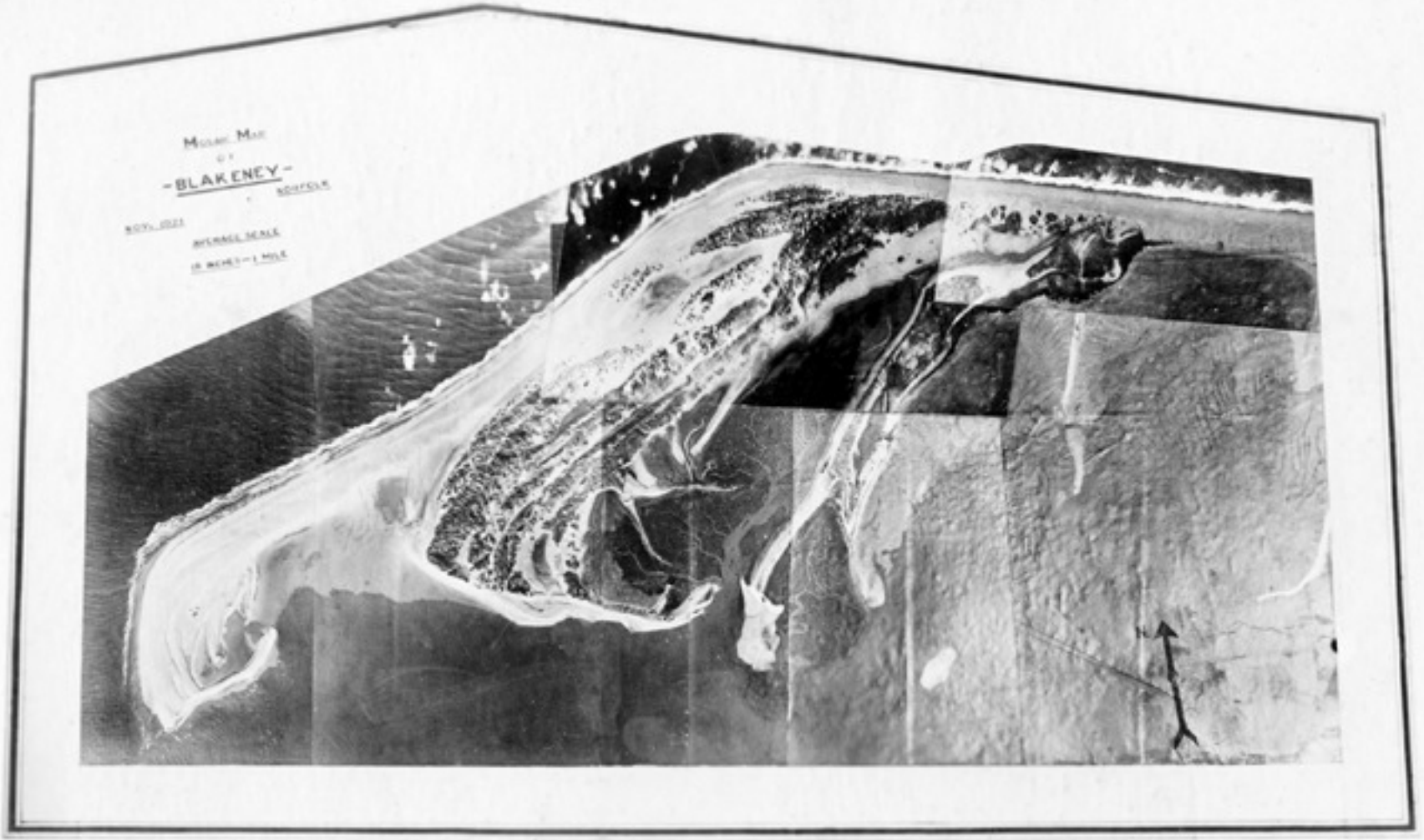



Griffiths family memorial in Bidston Churchyard


Aerial photograph of Cambridge
Station taken by Major Joseph Clifford
Griffiths in July 1922


Aerial photograph
of Duxford
Aerodrome taken
by Major Joseph
Clifford Griffiths
around
1918/1919


Aerial
photograph of
Duxford
Aerodrome
taken by Major
Joseph
Clifford
Griffiths
around
1918/1919




A collage of aerial photographs of Blakeny Point, Norfolk, taken by Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths in 1921. This area is now a seal reserve.



Aerial photograph of Kings College Cambridge, taken by Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths in 1922



Message flag from WWI. There were no radios, so aerial reconnaisance pilots wrote messages and wrapped them in the end of the weighted message holder, which was dropped to get messages quickly to their ground troops - the fluttering tail enabled it to be seen easily from the ground.




Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths, Royal Flying Corps - Squadron flag.

Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths, Royal Flying Corps - Cap badge






Major Joseph Clifford Griffiths, Royal Flying Corps - Wall plaque