

2nd Lieutenant Wilhelm Fritzeche[©]

Regimental number: —

32nd Flying Detachment

born: unknown - died: 17 May 1918

2nd Lieutenant Wilhelm Fritzeche was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 16 May 1918. He was severely wounded—he had fractures of his left leg and left jaw and shrapnel wounds to his left buttock and right thigh and leg. He died the following day and was buried in the German section of the Pernes British Military Cemetery Plot (Grave No. 8) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.¹

His next of kin was not known to the No. 1 CCCS chaplain and little information was found about this German airman.

Like the Royal Air Force, the German Air Force grew substantially during the course of the Great War. When it first took flight in 1914, there were 49 flying units and 15 reserve training centres. By the winter of 1918, there were over 420 flying units and 64 training centres. Factories were turning out 50 to 60 aeroplanes a month in the autumn of 1914 and, in the autumn of 1918, over 2000 aeroplanes a month. At the beginning of the war there were 550 flying personnel and, at the end of the war, about 5500 on active service and even more employed at home for training and other activities.²

Over the course of the war, the air force had developed an increased role in providing reconnaissance for infantry troops on the ground. In the last push—the German 1918 spring offensive—whole squadrons of aircraft preceded “the infantry into battle, wore down the enemy's resistance, destroyed artillery emplacements, and showed [German] infantry the path to Victory...”³ Perhaps Wilhelm was doing just this when he was injured and admitted to No. 1 CCCS.

© 2018 BIFHSGO

¹ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 28 February 2018), entry for Fritzeche, Wilhelm

² “The German Air Forge [*sic*] in the Great War,” compiled by Major Georg Paul Neumann, *All the Wars* (<http://www.allworldwars.com/The-German-Air-Force-In-The-Great-War-by-Neumann.html>: accessed 28 February 2018)

³ *Ibid.*