



## With a Smile and a Wave

*Peter Daybell*

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During the late summer of 1915 Captain Aidan Liddell's gallant exploits filled many newspaper columns and he was feted as a national hero. Already decorated for bravery while serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, and it was as a pilot that he attracted national acclaim. Badly wounded over enemy occupied Belgium, Liddell lost consciousness as his two-seater RE5 aircraft was raked by machine gun fire, and plunged out of control towards the ground. Despite terrible injuries and the extensive damage to his machine, he somehow recovered from an inverted dive and flew on for a further half an hour to the safety of the Allied lines, so saving his observer and a valuable aircraft. For this action he was awarded the Victoria Cross, but did not live to receive Britain's highest gallantry award and succumbed to his wounds a month later. With a Smile and a Wave provides a vivid picture of the squalor and danger of war, the backbreaking hardship of trench life and of the challenges of pioneer air fighting. It draws extensively on Captain Liddell's own letters and diaries and exposes the character and courage of the man in his own often compelling and moving words. But it is a story not just of war, but of growing up in a devout and prosperous family, of a Jesuit education at Stonyhurst College, and of Edwardian Oxford before the Great War. It portrays the privileged lifestyle of the English country gentleman, and describes how a very close knit and patriotic family dealt with the adversity of war.

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