

24th Aero Squadron

Photo Album

The photos on these pages recently came to light through the service of Member Lee Enich. In all probability they are from the album of a World War I U. S. Air Service veteran. They naturally raise several questions and further identification is invited.

Ground personnel of the 24th Aero Squadron arrived in England in the latter part of January 1918 and were assigned to airfields at Wye, London-Colney, Wyton and Sedgeford, in "flights." The London-Colney flight moved to Crayton a month later. None of these airfields can be positively identified from the pictures. Each flight was under the supervision of a U. S. officer, but the crews trained alongside, and were aided by, British aircrews. The flying personnel, pilots and observers, were undergoing separate flight training and did not join the Squadron until August.

Each aircrew was given instruction on engines and airplane rigging. The equipment was all British, however, and the value of some of this training was lost when the Squadron received French machines for combat. After three months as individual flights, the Squadron was brought together at Marborough and continued training as a single unit until July. Then, being judged ready for field duty, the Squadron was transported to France to be temporarily assigned to the 4th Corps Observation Group at Ourches. There was a further pause while the mechanics learned the "new" (to them) Salmson 2A2 airplanes, which belonged to the 91st Aero Squadron. The learning process required most of August.

On the 22nd of August 1918 the 24th Aero Squadron moved to Gondreville and secured its complement of Salmsons, and at the same time the attachment of pilots and observers made the Squadron whole for the first time. The St. Mihiel Offensive opened on 12 September, but the 24th was too inexperienced to participate and further shakedown was necessary. A few flights were made over the lines on observation patrol, but most flying was practice only.

Finally, the Squadron hit its stride after it moved to Vavincourt where it was assigned to the 1st Army Observation Group along with the veteran 91st and the new 9th Night Observation Squadron. In spite of the late start, during the next fifty days of the war and until the Armistice, an impressive record of activity was hung up. This was particularly true in the carrying out of specific and very special command missions ordered by 1st Army Headquarters.

The 24th was credited with eleven enemy aircraft destroyed and lost only three planes to enemy action. Three pilots were listed as missing, three observers

were missing with them, and one was killed in action. One of the missing teams was later found to have been taken prisoner. Attrition of airplanes was high. Records show fifteen were lost in crashes. Six officers were awarded decorations for meritorious service.



The forward radiator baffle on this Salmson had alternate stripes of red and black as the squadron marking definitely spiralled counterclockwise, not horizontal.



"Pulling through" the propeller was basic instruction for all ground crews. Aircraft is Avro 504, D 7532.



British crew poses beside its "Harry Tate", an R.E.8, B 7802, possibly from No 20 or 31 training Squadron.



Sopwith Pup was universally liked by pilots. This one was probably available at London-Colney for proficiency flights.



Victim of one of the many accidents experienced by the 24th Aero Squadron is this Salmson 2A2, airplane number "6".



Capt Woods' Salmson, "11", had two diagonal fuselage bands, each a red and white stripe, possibly a postwar marking.



Salmson 2A2, "20" of the 24th Aero Squadron, is stated in the album to have been credited with six Boche.



Salmson "17" was possibly flown by Lts Dillon and Lee who shot down three enemy aircraft on November 4th, 1918.



Lt Peters (apparently identified in this photo) and Lt Woitishek destroyed an enemy Fokker, October 19, 1918.