

SUPERB LITTLE PHOTO ALBUM TO A FIGHTER PILOT WITH 23 SQUADRON RAF FLYING SOPWITH DOLPHINS 1918



THE PILOT

Bernard Wolfe Fletcher, born 4th March 1899. Show as a Clerk in Civilian life up until 1917, his Medal Index Card shows he initially served with the Middlesex Regiment before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps on 29th August 1917, Gazetted Temporary 2nd Lieutenant (on Probation) on 23rd November 1917. Fletcher gained his Aviators Certificate (no 5522) on 6th January 1918, another copy his certificate photo is actually on the second page of the album. Fletcher is noted as flying Caudron's and Avro 504's and was clearly a good pilot as he immediately went on to flying Sopwith Pup's and Dolphin's. He was flying Dolphin's 23 Squadron when the Royal Air Force was formed in April 1918 and was briefly posted to 205 Squadron on 21st May 1918 before being posted to Home Establishment (Anti Zeppelin etc) on 16th June 1918. Fletcher's service record is quite hard to make out (copy included on CD), but he ends the War with 37 Training Squadron, which he joined on 21st October 1918. Fletcher was entitled to the British War and Victory medal, issued by the Air Ministry so would have served in France, presumably with 23 or 205 Squadron. It seems Fletcher died in 1936 and had been an executive in the Kenyan government.

THE ALBUM

The album, which is basically a small 16cm x 10cm notebook, has 94 photos in it dating from April and May 1918 (couple from March). Most of the photos were taken at Hooton? and Turnberry aerodromes. Content includes; many photos of Lt Fletcher in and around aircraft; mainly Sopwith Pup's and Dolphin's, as well as various photos of these types. Other aircraft include DH9's, Avro 504's, Bristol Fighter and monoplanes, Spad's, Se5's, various crashes, Sopwith Camel's, an Airship a couple of good group lineup shots of Dolphin's labelled 'Dolphins - 87 Squadron before proceeding overseas' and several excellent shots of a captured German Albatros DV with over painted British markings. There are four aerial shots at the back of the album, and a photo of Turnberry hotel, bar this all photos are pilots or aircraft.

Additionally, there are lots of pilots pictured, all named and a couple of incredibly rare photos of the experimental Vickers Hart fighter, one with Captain McCudden next to it and dated May 1918. This is famed 57 Victory Ace and VC winner James McCudden who talks of flying Vicker's experimentals a year earlier (in his book; Flying Fury). Presumably this was him trying another updated version out as he was known to have been back in the UK at this time.



23 Squadron was reequipped with Sopwith Dolphin's in mid March 1918 and no doubt the photos are of members of the squadron during the transition/training on this type from the Spad they had previously flown.



Album condition is a little worn, some pages a little damaged/stained but complete bar one removed photo. Photos are generally very good to excellent with just a small number faded. Photos are snapshot sized, variously 9 x 6cm and 6.7 x 4.2cm



What is particularly nice about the album is the addition of Fletcher's Aviation Certificate photo and that every photo has a description and pilots are named. As mentioned there are

some very rare photos amongst and a large number of excellent ones. The album is small but despite its size, it's a lovely little album relating to a fighter pilot.

