

**A FINE ROYAL FLYING CORPS FIGHTER ACE'S GROUP AWARDED TO A FLIGHT COMMANDER OF 29 SQUADRON WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON 14 AUGUST 1917 WHILST IN COMBAT WITH OBERLEUTNANT WIEGAND OF JASTA 10, WHICH FORMED PART OF VON RICHTHOFEN'S FLYING CIRCUS**



**BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS 'CAPT. T. A. OLIVER', GREAT WAR BRONZE MEMORIAL PLAQUE 'THOMAS ALFRED OLIVER'**

Thomas Alfred Oliver was born at Loughborough on 10 April 1893, son of Alfred and Annie Oliver of Capel Curig, Caernarvonshire. Oliver's father was an artist who had exhibited works at the Royal Academy and his son showed every sign of following suit, soon becoming artist-in-residence at the family studio in Capel Curig. However with the outbreak of the Great War he joined the 1/6th (Caernarvonshire and Anglesey) Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers with the rank of Private and the service number 1480 on 25 August 1914. Serving in this role for three months he applied for a commission with the Royal Flying Corps, being commissioned 2nd Lieutenant on 30 November 1914. Transferring to the Royal Flying Corps on 17 October 1915, being awarded his Aero Club Card, number 1921, on 17 November 1915 at Shoreham Military School. He graduated in December 1915 and was posted to No.1 Squadron (Recon and scouts) in France early in 1916.

On 20 March, in a raid against the German floatplane base at Zeebrugge, he fought his first combat in a Morane LA (5119), with 2nd Lieutenant D.A. Carruthers aboard, against an Aviatik over Cassel-Poperinghe. Thereafter, he was more or less constantly in action until being rested in January 1917, a period that witnessed at least two successful encounters. The first of these occurred on 3 July 1916 in a dogfight over Houthulst Wood, when Oliver was piloting a Morane BB (5170):

*'Lieutenant T. A. Oliver and Sergeant Mumford, in a Morane biplane of No. 1*

Squadron, encountered five hostile aeroplanes, driving off four with little trouble. The fifth showed more fight, but was last seen diving vertically with the engine full on, and is believed to have been destroyed' (R.F.C. Communiques 1915-16 refer).

And having switched to piloting fighters, the second on 6 August 1916:

'Lieutenant T. A. Oliver in a Nieuport Scout of No. 1 Squadron attacked a hostile machine over Kemmel which in appearance was very much like a Martinsyde. The Nieuport closed to within 150 feet of the hostile machine and fired two drums under the tail. The engine of the hostile machine was seen to stop, and it dived steeply. Five drums in all were fired at the German, whose machine was followed down to 3,000 feet with its propeller stopped. It is believed that the observer of this machine was also hit' (R.F.C. Communiques 1915-16 refer).



After a break in combat in January 1917 Oliver returned to the front; he was posted to No. 29 fighter Squadron (Nieuport 17's) as a Flight Commander on 10 August 1917 and the next day shot down two opponents - one over Roulers and another over Polinchove. Ordered to fly a patrol on 14 August he was shot down by Oberleutnant Weigand of Jasta 10.



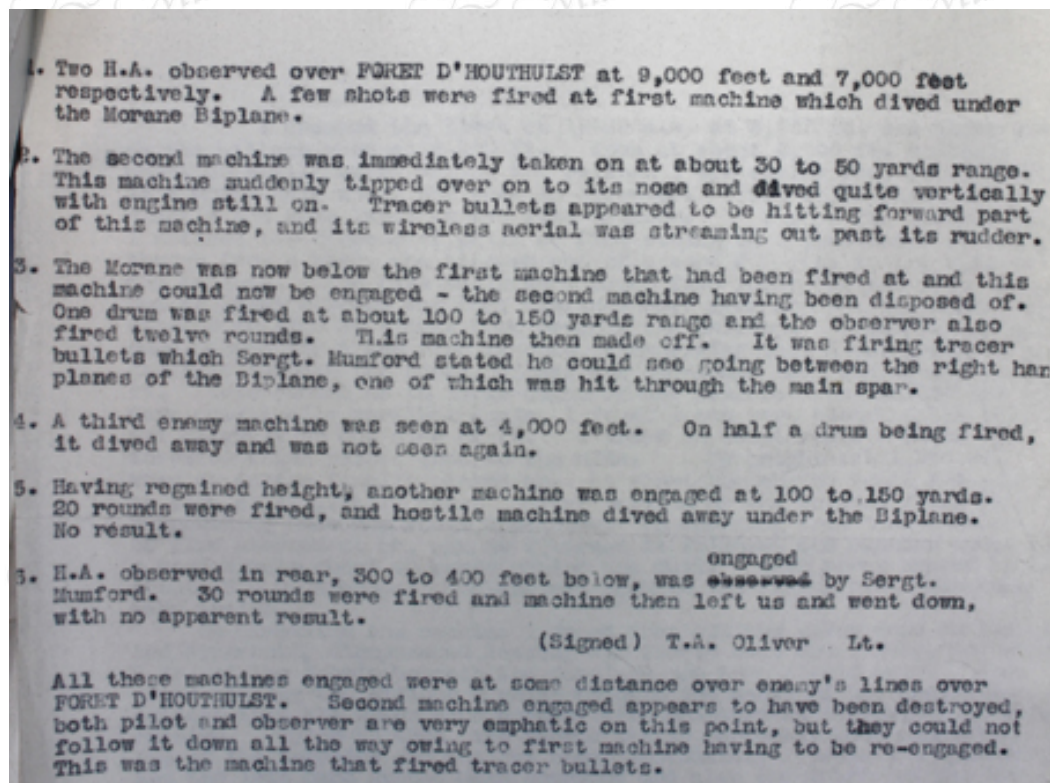
At this time, Jasta 10 was Commanded by the great Ace Werner Voss and formed part of Von Richthofen's Jagdgeschwader 1 (the flying circus). Voss was killed in action on 23 September 1917, Weigand taking command of the Jasta but was himself killed in action just two days later. Oliver has no known grave but is commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial

## OLIVER ORIGINAL AERIAL VICTORY COMBAT REPORTS

### AERIAL VICTORY ONE – ONE AIRCRAFT DESTROYED

3 July 1916 – Offensive Patrol 4.45pm

1 Squadron, Morane BB 5170. Lieut T.A. Oliver, pilot and Sergt R. Mumford, observer  
Combat with 5 Albatrosses, two of which had wireless aerials



1. Two H.A. observed over FORET D'HOUTHULST at 9,000 feet and 7,000 feet respectively. A few shots were fired at first machine which dived under the Morane Biplane.

2. The second machine was immediately taken on at about 30 to 50 yards range. This machine suddenly tipped over on to its nose and dived quite vertically with engine still on. Tracer bullets appeared to be hitting forward part of this machine, and its wireless aerial was streaming out past its rudder.

3. The Morane was now below the first machine that had been fired at and this machine could now be engaged - the second machine having been disposed of. One drum was fired at about 100 to 150 yards range and the observer also fired twelve rounds. This machine then made off. It was firing tracer bullets which Sergt. Mumford stated he could see going between the right hand planes of the Biplane, one of which was hit through the main spar.

4. A third enemy machine was seen at 4,000 feet. On half a drum being fired, it dived away and was not seen again.

5. Having regained height, another machine was engaged at 100 to 150 yards. 20 rounds were fired, and hostile machine dived away under the Biplane. No result.

6. H.A. observed in rear, 300 to 400 feet below, was engaged by Sergt. Mumford. 30 rounds were fired and machine then left us and went down, with no apparent result.

(Signed) T.A. Oliver . Lt.

All these machines engaged were at some distance over enemy's lines over FORET D'HOUTHULST. Second machine engaged appears to have been destroyed, both pilot and observer are very emphatic on this point, but they could not follow it down all the way owing to first machine having to be re-engaged. This was the machine that fired tracer bullets.

### AERIAL VICTORY - UNCONFIRMED

8 July 1916 – Patrol 6.50am

1 Squadron, Morane 5170. Lieut T.A. Oliver, pilot and Sergt E.A. Cook, observer  
Combat with 2 Aviatiks and 1 L.V.G.

1. 2 H.A. observed, while dropping papers, over VYFEBGE, and attacked N.E. of FORET' D'HOULST. Morane Biplane dived at lower H.A. About 20 rounds fired, machine gun stopped, Morane Biplane turned and Observer fired 15 rounds.
2. Morane Biplane climbed to attack the higher H.A., remainder of ammunition in drum fired under H.A.'s tail by Observer at 75 to 100 yards. H.A. last observed going down.
3. Lower H.A. observed under Morane Biplane's tail, Observer fired about 50 rounds, machine dived steeply over CORTENARCK.
4. H.A. observed over ARMENTIERES, Morane Biplane followed and attacked over LILLE. Morane Biplane dived, machine gun stopped first and then one drum fired. H.A. went down South of LILLE

(Signed) T.A. Oliver Lieut.

REPORT ON THE PROBABLE CAUSES OF LEWIS GUN STOPPAGE.

With one exception all the recent jams appear to have been caused through faulty .303 ordinary ammunition. Owing to a shortage Kynoch is only used in Scouts. In the other machines Kings Norton and Government ammunition is used, every cartridge being carefully tested for size and shape.

A number of miss-fires and weak explosions have been detected while firing with these last two makes of cartridges on the range, and as recent jams can only have happened through (1) hard extractions (2) weak ammunition, and as the gun has in each case been found to be in perfect working condition, and all cartridges have been tested for size, - weak ammunition would seem to be the source of the trouble.

Buckingham tracers have been tested on the range and found to be very reliable while they give quite as powerful a recoil action as Kynoch



ONE OF OLIVERS SKETCHES OF HIS AIRCRAFT



## AERIAL VICTORY TWO – ONE AIRCRAFT OUT OF CONTROL

6 August 1916 – Offensive Patrol 8am

1 Squadron, Nieuport 16 Scout A125. Lieut T.A. Oliver

Combat with L.V.G. or Albatros

— Narrative. —

1. 8-35 a.m.

An enemy machine was observed over KEMMEL at about 12,000 ft, in appearance very like a Martynside with some colour on the fuselage, the only colour observed was red, but it is thought that there was more than one colour. The crosses on the lower planes were unusually small. The machine was not being fired at by our A.A. guns.

The Nieuport closed to within 150 ft. of the enemy machine, keeping under the tail, and fired two drums into it. Fire was returned by enemy observer. The engine was seen to stop, and it dived steeply. The engine stopped four times, and each time it started up it emitted a cloud of smoke apparently from the exhaust. Five drums in all were fired at the H.A. and the machine was followed down to the clouds at 3,000 ft. with its propeller stopped. Tracers were seen going into fore part of machine. It is thought from the behaviour of the observer that he was hit also. H.A. went down through clouds between WARNETON and LILLE, under control but without engine.

(Signed) T.A. OLIVER, Lt.

NOTE. With regard to type of machine, Lt. Oliver did not take note of shape of tail.

## AERIAL VICTORY THREE AND FOUR – ONE AIRCRAFT DESTROYED, ONE AIRCRAFT OUT OF CONTROL

11 August 1917 – Offensive Patrol 6.45pm

29 Squadron, Nieuport 17 Scouts B1557, A6784 and B1645. Capt T.A. Oliver, 2/Lieuts C.

W. Cudmore and J. D. Payne

Combat with 3 Albatros Scouts V strut type, 2 two-seaters

1. By Capt. Oliver.

Whilst on O.P. our Patrol engaged 3 E.A. Scouts at about 16,000 ft. I dived and fired about 20 rounds into the nearest at 60 ft. range. He commenced to spin but recovered at once. I then saw Lt. Guy spinning with 2 E.A. on his tail. I attacked the nearest and drove him down.

I then saw two machines, which I took to be a Nieuport and E.A., fighting at about 4,000 ft. I dived and observed a two-seater E.A. which I attacked, firing about 40 rounds at close range, and saw him go down completely out of control, sideways, and then on his back.

Later I saw 3 E.A. I dived on them, and they disappeared into the clouds. I went down, and saw a two-seater doing artillery work. I at once engaged him, and fired the remainder of my drum - about 30 rounds - at 50 yards range. He went down very steeply, under control, and landed in a field behind enemy's lines, between LANGEMARCK & ZONNEBEKE. In landing he ran into a hedge.

SUMMARY:- One E.A. driven down out of control by Capt. Oliver.  
One combat - decisive.  
One driven down under control, and one forced to land behind enemy's lines.  
Two combats - indecisive.

2. By 2/Lt. C.W. CUDMORE. When on the above patrol I fired a burst into one E.A. at 40 yards range. I observed no effect; so again dived and fired another burst at 50 yards range. He then lost control, but regained it; so I dived a third time and fired several bursts at very close range. I plainly saw my tracers hitting enemy pilot, and he went down in a vertical nose dive completely out of control.

SUMMARY:- One E.A. driven down out of control by 2/Lt. Cudmore.  
One combat - decisive.

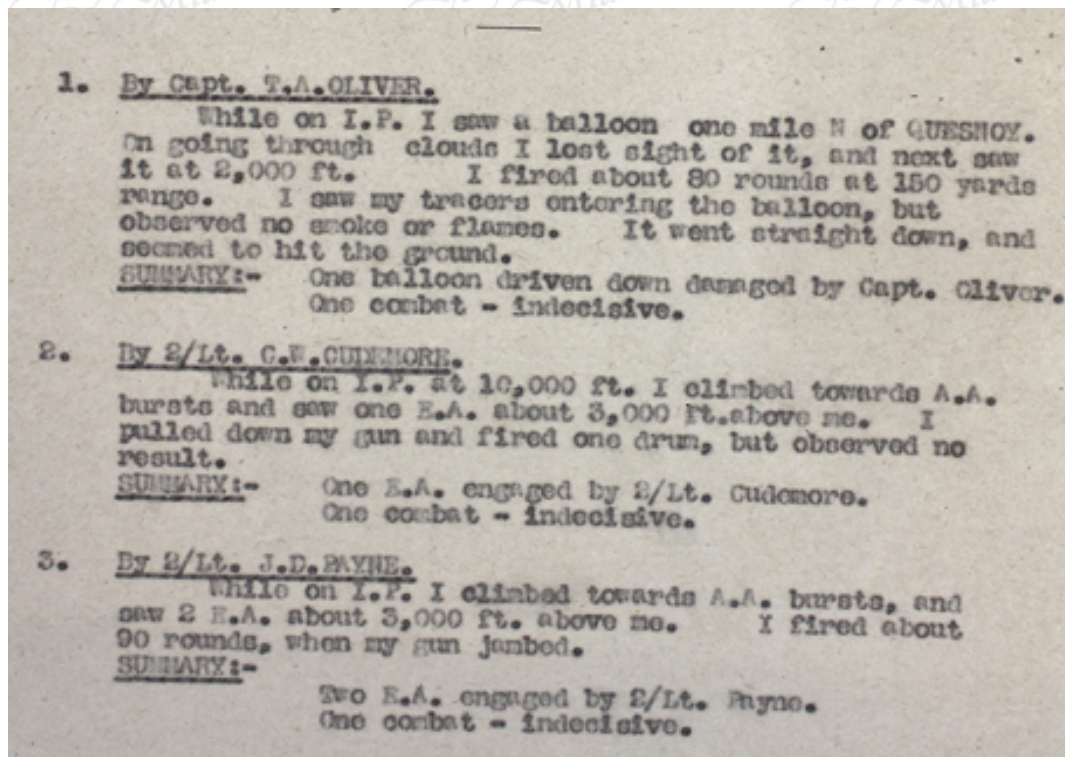


## ONE BALLOON DRIVEN DOWN DAMAGED – NOT COUNTED AS VICTORY

12 August 1917 – Offensive Patrol 12.15pm

29 Squadron, Nieuport 17 Scouts A6784 and B1648. Capt T.A. Oliver and 2/Lieut C. W. Cudmore

Combat with 1 Balloon and 2 Albatros scouts





## AERIAL VICTORY FIVE – ONE AIRCRAFT OUT OF CONTROL

12 August 1917 – Practice 5.45pm

29 Squadron, Nieuport 17 Scout

Combat with 1 two-seater (with plain, not maltese crosses) and strafing enemy trenches

By Capt. T.A. OLIVER.

While on practice I observed A.A. bursts over POLLINGHOVE. I climbed towards them and saw one two-seater E.A. I attacked from underneath, and fired 50 rounds at 70 yards range.

The E.A. stopped firing after I had fired a few rounds, and then did a stalling turn, followed by a wide spiral and finally a spin.

I followed, and finished my drum at intervals. The E.A. came out of the spin twice, but only for a short time. I noticed that his propeller had stopped.

I then lost sight of the E.A. in the clouds, which were at about 6,000 ft..

While searching for E.A. I came over the trenches at about 1,000 ft. and flew along them. I saw a shell hit the ground, and a few seconds later about 20 men emerged from beside the shell hole and ran across the ground. I dived to 400 ft. and fired 80 rounds at them. The men scattered, and I think some must have been hit, but I did not actually see any fall.

SUMMARY:-

One E.A. brought down OUT OF CONTROL by Capt. T.A. OLIVER.  
One combat - decisive.

Enemy INFANTRY attacked from 400 ft. and scattered.

Note: Squadron records were only searched for combat reports around the known dates of victories. Records may well hold further indecisive combat reports relating to Oliver at other dates.

Oliver had continued to draw and paint during his service in the RFC, producing some stunning pictures of aircraft he flew in. One was used on the front cover of one of Cross and Cockade 2011 journals and other pictures have been located online:

<https://www.crossandcockade.com/blog.asp?Display=90>





ONE OF OLIVERS SKETCHES OF HIS AIRCRAFT





Condition VF, small EK to BWM or better. Ex DNW 2004 when the two medals were sold without the plaque which has since been reunited with the medals. These displayed in fine contemporary fitted leather covered display case. Medals can be purchased without the case of desired. Sold together with copied service papers, extracts from an article relating to the recipient and Commonwealth War Graves details along with a copied MIC and digital copies of his combat reports.

A most interesting group to a fighter Ace and talented artist, who was killed in action in combat with elements of the Red Baron's Flying Circus