



**WARPAINT SERIES No.122**

# Albatros D.I – D.III

By Dave Hooper

Albatros D.III, D2015/17, was flown by Georg Simon of Jasta 11 when it was forced down on 14th June 1917. This aircraft was overpainted in red with a green band around the fuselage behind the cockpit opening. In the hands of the British the aircraft was designated G42 and is seen here after British markings have been applied.





**Albatros D.I 390/16** flown by Lt. Otto Höhne, *Jasta 2*, September 1916. Höhne was one of the original members of *Jasta 2*. He survived the war with a total of six confirmed victories.



**Albatros D.I 410/16** flown briefly by Prinz Friedrich Karl of Prussia before he was brought down in no-man's land on the 21st March 1917. This aircraft is believed to have been painted sage green. The skull motif was repeated on the spinner.



**Albatros D.II**, pilot unknown, *Jasta 16b*. *Jasta 16b* was formed in October 1916 based on personnel from KEK and the Bavarian FA9b



**Albatros D.II D.504/16**, thought to have been flown by Lt. Franz von Scheele, *Kasta II* although the aircraft has also been associated with *Hptm* Rudolf Freiherr von Eisebeck.

Drawings by  
Jan Polc





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## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1916 the balance of air superiority over the Western Front was clearly in the Allied Air Forces' favour. The period of German dominance in the air, known popularly as the Fokker Scourge, had ended as the Allies introduced new biplane fighters such as the Nieuport 11 and de Havilland pusher DH2. These new aircraft had a clear technical advantage over the Fokker monoplanes that had caused havoc in

the skies during the late 1915 and early 1916 period. Perhaps the clearest indication that the balance had tipped in favour of the Allies occurred on Sunday 18th June 1916 when Max Immelman, first and most famous of the early German aces, known popularly as the Eagle of Lille, was brought down near Sallaumines.

The British dominance in the air during this period was so great that while the horrific events unfolded on the ground during the first day the Battle of the Somme, the situation above was such that the aircraft of the RFC encountered very little resistance. In fact the most notable event in the air occurred around 06.00, one and a half hours before the whistles blew and the British infantry went 'over the top'. Two DH2 pushers flying solo patrols on separate beats engaged with ten German two seat bombers crossing the line. The action, for which Major Lionel Rees later received a Victoria Cross, resulted in one aircraft driven down and one aircraft damaged. More importantly the formation of bombers split up and was unable to complete its job.

By the end of the third phase of the Somme offensive in November 1916, the situation in the air had somewhat changed and the balance of power was beginning to move back in favour of the Germans. While it is true that more aircraft were deployed into the Somme sectors as the campaign unfolded, two key factors are generally considered have had a huge impact and contributed to this dramatic turn around in fortunes. The first of these occurred in August 1916 with the formation of the first *Jagdstaffeln*, which for the first time permanently organised German single seat fighter pilots and aircraft into a separate unit known as a *Jagdstaffel* or *Jasta*. The second

Above: A side view of an Albatros D.III at Fokker Werke south west of Schwerin. Some of the fuselage features are typical of OAW built machines, however the rudder shape suggests that this is an Albatros Werke built aircraft.

factor was the gradual increase in numbers of the new D-type biplane fighters (D-type stood for *Doppledecker*, meaning two wings) which had begun to arrive on the frontline just prior to the beginning of the Somme offensive.

The first of the D-types to arrive at the front line were the early Fokker biplanes. While these aircraft were an improvement over the monoplanes they were generally under powered. The Halberstadt followed in June, and its inline Mercedes engines were an improvement on the rotary powered Fokker biplanes, providing the Germans with an aircraft that was at least on a par with the Allied fighters. In the very last days of August the first examples of a new aircraft arrived at the front. The Albatros D.I and its early successors, the D.II and D.III, would essentially begin to dominate the skies over the Western Front cumulating in a period known popularly as Bloody April.

Very little firsthand development information survives and as such a large portion of this narrative has been devoted to the operational history of the type up until the introduction of the D.V in May 1917. Much of the success of the Albatros lay in the ability of Albatros Werke GmbH and its subsidiary factories, including Ostdeutsche Albatros Werke (OAW), to produce aircraft in large numbers, quickly. As has been pointed out in the past by many historians and writers, the Albatros served in almost every *Jasta* and on almost every battlefield at some point between its arrival on the front in August 1916 and the end of the war.

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**Above: The Antoinette was the first aircraft to be built under licence by Albatros Werke in 1909 throughout the Great War.**

In the spring and summer of 1914 the Albatros DD piloted by Thelan established a number of altitude records, while Hirth competed in a number of events on the race calendar including the prestigious *Rallye de Monaco* where *Flight* magazine reported that, 'On Saturday Hirth on an Albatros made a fine flight from Gotha to Marseilles with a Passenger'. Hirth however had less luck on the final stage of the race flying the DDK floatplane: 'In coming down at the control at Tamaris however, the machine capsized and had to be towed ashore. The pilot and passenger having to be picked up by motor boats.'

A version of the DD known as the *Renndoppeldekker*, which had a selection of interchangeable wings (one bay, two bay and three bay), competed in the Third International *Flugmeeting* at Aspern in June 1914. Company pilot Ernst von Loessl flew the aircraft in a single bay configuration to victory in the 100 kilometre speed prize event. Many historians have speculated that the single bay *Renndoppeldekker* was perhaps the genesis of what would become the Albatros scout.

Albatros began expanding its production capability with the establishment of a factory at Schneidmühl, Pomerania in April 1914. This factory became known as Ostdeutsche Albatroswerke GmbH (OAW).

#### **The Genesis of the D-type and the Jasta**

It is no coincidence that the arrival of the D-type roughly coincided with the formation of the first *Jagdstaffeln*. When war broke out in July 1914, fledgling air forces were little more than a random collection of aircraft intended to be employed in a support and reconnaissance role. Indeed many traditionalists still saw the aeroplane as not much more than a toy, expecting the cavalry to continue as the army's main source of reconnaissance information. The aeroplane however very quickly proved its worth, especially once the war on the Western Front developed into trench stalemate. The aeroplane became vitally important, not only as a method of acquiring information, but

**Left: Albatros also built Farman's under licence. This particular aircraft was designated F2 and built around 1910-11**



#### **Albatros Werke GmbH Before the War**

Albatros Werke GmbH was founded by Walter Huth and Otto Wiener in December 1909. Walter Huth was an ex-army officer with a keen interest in aviation while Otto Wiener was an employee of Rumpler Werke. Initially founded by Huth as the *Pilot Flugtechnische Gesellschaft* (Pilot Aviation Technical Company), the company name was quickly changed to Albatros Werke GmbH when Otto Wiener took up partnership within the company. Based in Johannisthal, a suburb of Berlin, Albatros Werke initially built Antoinettes and Farman's under licence.

In 1910 Albatros established a private training school for military pilots. This was perhaps the beginning of the company's long and fruitful relationship with the military *Fliogertruppe*.

By the end of 1911 the company was displaying an in-house designed biplane at the Third Paris Aero Salon. The wood constructed aircraft, with what was described as a torpedo body, became known as the MZ1 (*Militär Zweidecker Nr.1*). This was essentially a two seat Taube with a biplane configuration. Albatros Werke's next aircraft was the MZ2 which was based on Farman designs, and in 1912 a floatplane version of this aircraft was sold to the Navy.

During this period the company's structural engineer, *Ober-Ingenieur* Hugo Grohmann, invented and perfected the semi monocoque fuselage. This was a process of using thin plywood panels over a wooden framework, resulting in a tough but light

construction that would be the hallmark of the company's aircraft throughout the war years.

By now Albatros had assembled a design and engineering team that included renowned competition pilots Robert Thelan and Helmut Hirth, as well as Ernst Heinkel and Rudolf Schubert. This resulted in a flood of new designs being developed including the EE monoplane, a Taube design using Grohmann's semi monocoque fuselage structure. Hirth flew an amphibious version of the EE, designated HE, at the Bodensee Marine Aircraft contest on Lake Constance in July 1913, winning the 25,000 Mark prize. Another floatplane design, the WDD, was sold in small numbers to the Navy and was eventually redesignated as the Albatros W.I.

Without doubt the most significant design of this period was a two bay twin seat aircraft originally designated DD and developed in tandem with a three bay version that would become the DDK. Designed by Thelan and Hirth the three bay version was first to be unveiled in December 1913. A month later Otto Wiener informed the Army transport command that two new Albatros biplanes had reached an altitude of 800 metres in 5.5 minutes (two bay version) and 7.5 minutes (three bay version): 'A result that to our knowledge no military machine has even come close to achieving.'

This aircraft would eventually be redesignated the Albatros B.I and B.II, B.I being the three bay version, which was produced and used in large numbers



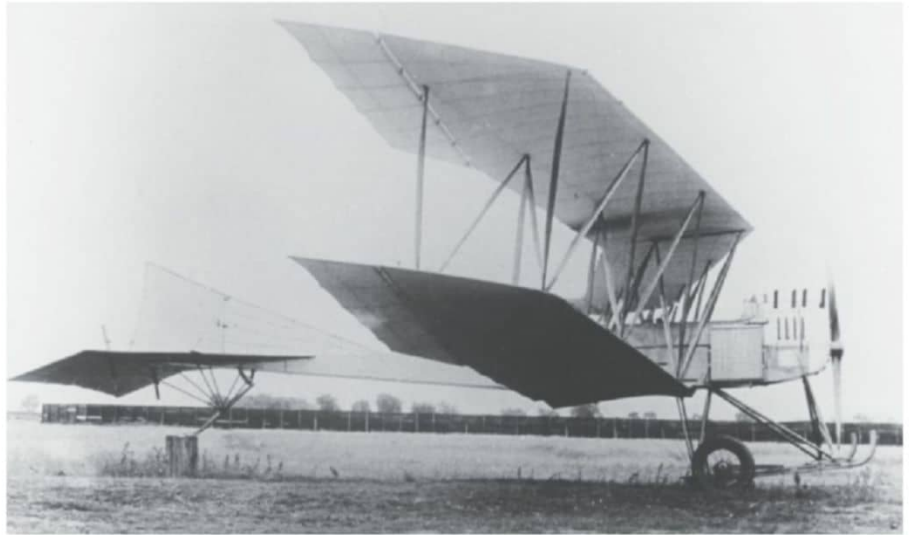
**Right: The Pfeil-Doppledecker, known as the Arrow because of the shape of its wings, was an in-house design from around 1912**

also as a method of preventing the enemy from acquiring information. And so the single seat scout became an important part of a unit.

In April 1915 Anthony Fokker developed a method of synchronising a forward firing machine gun with the rotation of the propeller so that bullets firing through the propeller arc would miss the spinning blades. Fokker mounted his synchronisation unit onto a development of a French Morane Saulnier monoplane and the first true fighter, the *Eindecker*, was effectively born. Even though the performance of the aircraft was marginal, the addition of a forward firing gun mounted on the fuselage turned the *Eindecker* into a shark. As more and more *Eindeckers* arrived at the front a period of good hunting known as the Fokker Scourge gave the Germans air superiority over the Allies.

At this time units on both sides were made up of various types of aircraft each intended for different roles with the idea that each unit provided its own support. German *Eindecker* fighter pilots typically flew solo or in pairs but by early 1916 the German fighters were more frequently being organised into separate temporary formations known as *Kampfeinsatz-Kommando* or *KEK*.

The Battle of Verdun in early 1916 was the proving ground for Allied technical and strategic advances in the air that by the summer would bring the German Air Service to its lowest ebb of the entire war. Technically the new French Nieuport 11 biplane fighter, with an upper wing mounted machine gun, had a distinct advantage in speed and manoeuvrability over the *Eindecker*. What made the situation worse was that the long anticipated updated *Eindecker*, the E.IV, proved to be a disappointment, as Oswald Boelcke, one of Germany's highest scoring aces of the period, reported: 'The machine loses much speed in climbing so that several Nieuport biplanes escaped me in consequence. The climbing capacity falls off considerably at great heights (over 3,000 metres). This defect could be avoided by bringing out a light biplane.'



Boelcke was not alone in voicing the need for a biplane fighter, and under increasing pressure on 8th March 1916 the *Idflieg* placed an order for twelve Halberstadt D type scouts, which would begin to arrive at the front in June, signalling the beginning of the end of the *Eindecker* era.

When the Battle of Verdun commenced on 21st February 1916, the German Air Force had assembled an impressive force of 168 aircraft including forty Fokker and Pfalz fighters. Unprepared for the onslaught, the French were initially outnumbered almost two to one. The Germans used a defensive blockade to try to stop the French from penetrating German airspace, employing two seaters to hold the perimeter and fighters to mop up those that did get through. The tactic however proved to be wasteful, ineffective and a strain on the rotary engines that powered the monoplane fighters. The French, who had already begun grouping fighters into separate *Escadrilles de chasse* (fighter squadrons), had one such *Escadrille* stationed in the area at the start of the Verdun campaign. *Chef des Escadrons* Jean Baptiste Marie Charles de Tricornot de Rose wasted no time in bringing more *Escadrilles* into the Verdun sector and organising the best of these together into a temporary *Groupe de chasse*. The *escadrilles* flew offensive patrols with the express intention of picking off as many

German aircraft as possible. The strategy worked in the French favour and by March 1916 was beginning to have an impact.

The lessons learned over the Verdun battlefield in the spring of 1916 and during the first phase of the Somme in July would have long lasting implications. The Germans would never again attempt a blockade style strategy and the summer/autumn of 1916 would see a complete reorganisation of the German Air Service and the birth of the first *Jagdstaffeln*. Perhaps more importantly, the battle in the skies above Verdun allowed the German fighter pilots to learn and develop methods of fighting in organised formations rather than as individuals.

#### **The Birth of the *Jasta* and Boelcke's Dicta**

On 10th August 1916 *Feldflugchef* Hermann von der Lieth-Thomson ordered the formation of the first *Jagdstaffel*. The *Jagdstaffel*, or *Jasta*, was a permanent grouping of single seat fighters specified as consisting of fourteen single seat scout aircraft and twelve pilots although it was rare that a full complement of aircraft or pilots was maintained. Many historians credit the idea of a permanent formation of fighters solely to Oswald Boelcke. It is more likely that the call for change evolved from the experiences of many who had faced the organised French *Escadrilles de chasse* above Verdun with Boelcke's voice being one of the more prominent and respected.

Initially six *Jagdstaffeln* were formed. *Jastas* 1, 2 and 5 would be linked to the 1 *Armee* while *Jastas* 3, 4 and 6 would serve with 2 *Armee*. Initially the *Jagdstaffeln* consisted mainly of existing Fokker and Pfalz monoplanes, but throughout the end of summer and autumn new D-types would drip feed into the *Jagdstaffeln* gradually phasing out the obsolete monoplanes. The majority of these original *Jastas* were formed from existing *KEK* formations although some were entirely new formations with *Jagdstaffel* 2 in particular including a group of pilots handpicked by Boelcke.

Originally designated the as the DDK, the Albatros B.I was a two seat biplane of conventional configuration that seated the observer and the pilot in separate cockpits in tandem. The three bay B.I and two bay B.II would be built in large numbers through the early war years, some remaining in service until the end of the conflict





**Above:** The first Halberstadt D.I prototype was a downsized version of the B.II, reputedly built towards the end of 1915 suggesting that Halberstadt were the first German company to develop a scout in a biplane configuration

Following the death of Max Immelmann on 18th June 1916, Hptm Oswald Boelcke, now the highest scoring and most famous living German ace, was ordered to report to the *feldflugchef*. Well aware that something was building on the Somme, Boelcke expected to be transferred to this sector. Instead, to his disappointment Boelcke was given a desk job in Charleville. Boelcke's anger at this order is clear in a letter he wrote to his parents: 'I was to sit in a glass case in Charleville – I was not to fly at all for the present because my 'nerves' must be rested, but I could organise a Fokker Staffel in Charleville. Well you can imagine my rage!'

In the event, Boelcke would only spend a few days in Charleville. As *Feldflugchef* Hermann von der Lieth-Thomson wrote: 'Boelcke then spent several days with my staff co-operating closely with our experts in establishing the basic principles of scout flying, and making preparations for the further development of this new arm.'

These would become the founding principles of aerial combat that become known as Boelcke's Dicta. Thomson later wrote: 'At my request he (Boelcke) drew up the following summary of principles that

*should govern every air flight; briefly composed and simply expressed, they were also to serve as a source of success for the younger scouts. These principles established by Boelcke remained in force until the end of the war:*

1. *Seek an advantage before attacking. If possible keep the sun behind you.*
2. *Once you've started an attack, always carry it through.*
3. *Fire only at close range and only when your opponent is properly in your sights.*
4. *Always keep your eye on your opponent, and don't let yourself be deceived by ruses.*
5. *Whenever you attack, it is important to go at your opponent from behind.*
6. *If your opponent attacks you from above, don't try to evade him but fly right at him.*
7. *When you are over enemy territory, never forget your own line of retreat.*
8. *For the Staffel: attack on principle in a group of four or six, but when the fight breaks down in to individual combats, several shouldn't go after the same opponent.'*

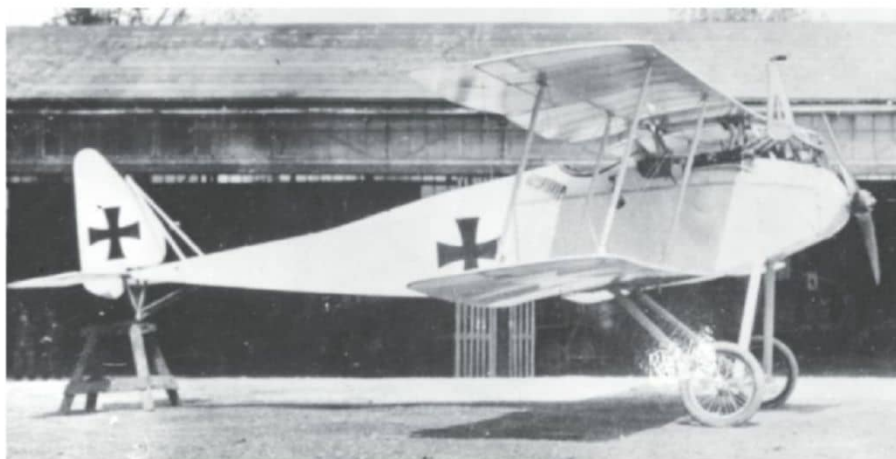
Oswald Boelcke managed to convince Thomson that a tour of the Eastern front would be more beneficial than a desk job. After travelling through Turkey, Macedonia and Bulgaria, Boelcke visited his brother Wilhelm, who was commanding *Kampfstaffel 10* on the Eastern Front at Kovel in the Ukraine. It was while visiting his brother that Boelcke received a telegram from *Feldflugchef* Thomson: 'Return to the Western Front as quickly as possible to organise and lead *Jagdstaffel 2* on the Somme front.'

On his brother's recommendation Boelcke selected two pilots to return to the Western Front with him. The first, Lt n Erwin Böhme, wrote: 'You can imagine my surprise the other morning when Boelcke suddenly came up to me and simply asked: 'Would you like to come to the Somme with me?' I've never called out a happier yes in all my life.'

The second pilot was a young ex-cavalryman called Manfred von Richthofen who had a similar experience: 'Suddenly there was a knock at my door early in the morning and there stood the great man with the Pour le Mérite. I could have hugged him when he asked whether I wanted to go with him to the front.'

Boelcke wasted no time in returning to the Somme and by the end of August had selected a base of operations for *Jagdstaffel 2* at Bertincourt. Aircraft and pilots began to arrive at the beginning of September including Leopold Riemann transferring from *Jagdstaffel 1* who on 1st September 1916 brought with him a brand new Albatros D.I.

**Left:** A side profile of the Halberstadt D.III. Examples of the D.II and D.III arrived at the front at around the same time in June 1916







## ENTER THE ALBATROS

The Albatros was designed by the Albatros Werke design bureau led at that time by Robert Thelen. By this time Grohmann's semi monocoque process had evolved to allow the creation of a curved fuselage. The process was such that it removed any need for bracing wires. In 1914 *Flight* magazine printed an assessment of the Albatros DD, which was manufactured using an earlier version of Grohmann's semi monocoque process: 'According to calculations carried out by the Albatros Werke and corrected by Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Luftfahrt, the factor of safety of the fuselage of the Albatros biplane is about 60, and the bending resistance of this type of fuselage is 2.5 times greater than that of a diagonally wired fuselage of the same outside dimensions and having members of the size usually employed in structures of this type. The Versuchsanstalt also states that the Albatros Werke are justified in concluding that the bending resistance of the veneer type fuselage is greater than that of a cross wired fuselage of the same weight.'

A later *Flight* report on a captured D.I (D391/16) made the following assessment of the fuselage: 'It is a modification on the standard Albatros system of fuselage construction, but differs in that it approaches nearer the true monocoque. It is, in fact, a compromise between the two and suggests itself as an excellent solution to the problem of the 'commercial' monocoque – simple in construction, low in cost and of great strength.'

The fuselage framework was essentially made from spruce and ash. 'Over the whole

of this framework is laid a covering of three-ply, which is tacked and screwed to the longerons and formers.'

Both the lower and upper wings had no dihedral, the upper wing being a single unit with an angle of incidence that varied from 5° 3' at the centre to 4° on the left wing tip and 2° on the right wing tip. As *Flight* later responded to a reader's query: 'The reason for the difference in the angle of incidence of the left and right hand wing tips of the Albatros D.I described in Flight recently, is that, when the engine is running, the torque tends to rotate the machine around its longitudinal axis in the opposite direction to that of the engine. As the engine is a right handed one, it follows that there is a tendency for the machine to tilt over to the left. As the angle of incidence of the left wing is 4° and that of the right wing 2°, the left wing lifts more than the right, thus providing a restoring couple.'

The main wing spars were positioned well forward with the front spar being around 10cm (4in) from the wing's leading edge and the rear spar around 79cm (2ft 7½in) further back. Ribs on the lower wing were spaced about 41cm (16¼in) apart, while the ribs on the upper wing were positioned 35cm (13¾in) apart. All of the flying surfaces were fabric covered.

The Albatros was the first German fighter to be powered by a Mercedes D.III 160hp inline engine, which had been first developed in 1914. Up until its use in the Albatros D-type it had been employed as the power plant for C series two seaters, having been considered too large for a single seat scout. The engine had a proven history of reliability and more importantly the increase

**Above: Albatros D.I 385/16 was one of twelve prototype machines ordered by the Idflieg at the end of June. 385/16 is here photographed at Johannisthal in September 1916. Note the upward facing exhaust on this early machine**

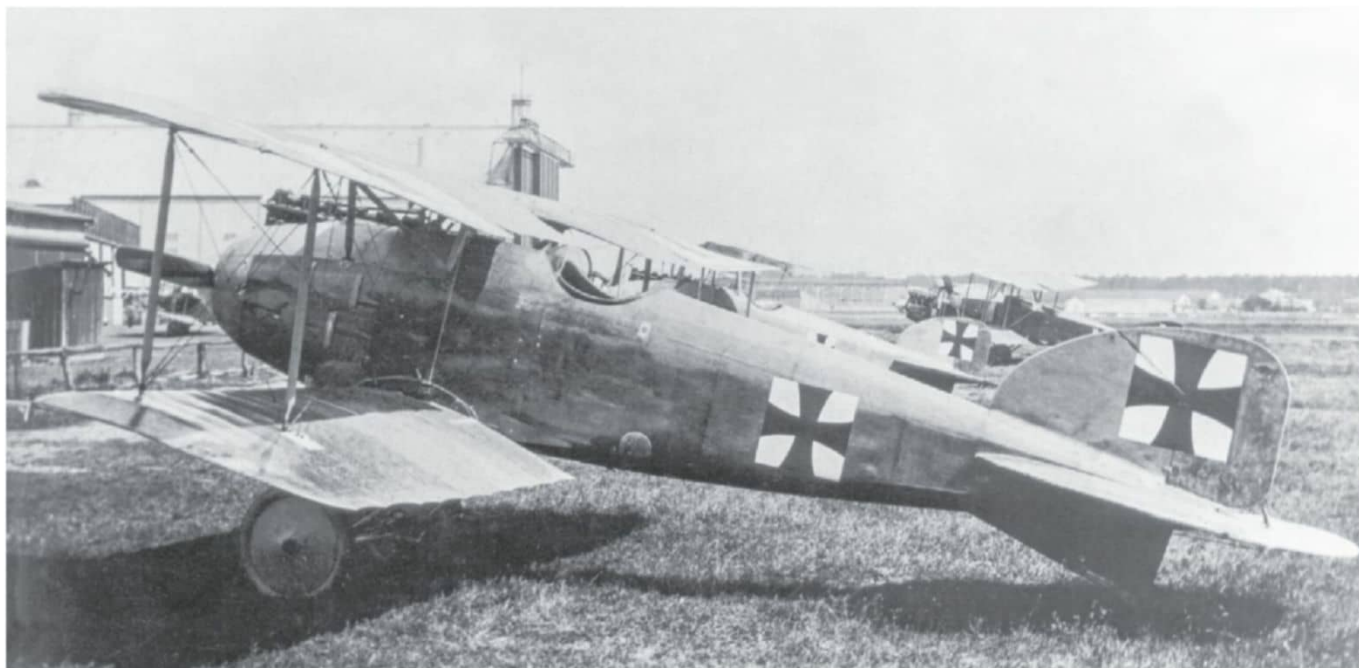
in power allowed the Albatros to be armed with two MG 08/15 Spandau machine guns reducing the risk of interruption in combat due to machine gun stoppage.

It is assumed that the Idflieg must have issued a specification for a single seat biplane scout early in 1916 although no record of this has survived. Certainly we know that Halberstadt, Fokker, Schütte-Lanz and Albatros were all working on such aircraft at around the same period.

Little is known of the development of the Albatros Scout although there is evidence that a prototype was present at a show of aircraft types (*Typenschau*) at Johannisthal on 15th April 1916 alongside aircraft from Fokker and Kondor. A *Typenschau* was in many ways the forerunner of the competitions of 1918 where prototype aircraft would be shown off to senior military officials and high ranking pilots. This may not have been the only such event where the Albatros was shown off to visiting dignitaries. Rudolf Berthold later wrote: 'In May, I wanted to take the Albatros biplane fighter with me to the front'.

However it should be noted that Berthold was in convalescence during this period, following a crash in his Pfalz E.IV that occurred on 25th April, after which he was grounded for four months. As such Berthold's statement that the event occurred in May could be questioned.

It is known that at the beginning of June the Albatros D.I wing cellule was subjected



**Above: Albatros D.II 386/16 prototype at Johannisthal airfield. This aircraft would later become the mount of Oswald Boelcke**

subsidiary factory Ostdeutsche Albatros Werke GmbH (890-939/16). A further 100 D.IIs were ordered on 5th September (D.1700-1799/16), which included seventy five aircraft built under licence by Luft-Verkehrs-Gesellschaft (LVG).

to static testing at Aldershof. At this time the rear upper wing spar did not meet the requirement for pulling out of a dive. Subsequent testing on 3rd July also failed for the same requirement, but passed four days later after a new spar was fitted.

It is important to point out that the D.I and D.II were developed at relatively the same time. The most visible difference between the two aircraft was that the V shaped central wing pylon, typical of period Albatros biplane designs was replaced with a splayed cabane structure that allowed the upper wing to be lowered, thereby giving the pilot a better field of vision.

It is a common misconception that the D.II did not have the side mounted 'ear' radiators that were such a prominent feature of the D.I. This is not true as early

production D.IIs retained this feature but they were later removed in favour of a Teves and Braun radiator mounted in the central section of the upper wing.

It is thought that five D.I prototypes were built for testing and evaluation. These included works number 2759, which on 17th June 1916 was recorded as being able to climb from 1,000 metres in four minutes to 4,000 metres in twenty minutes during a routine company flight investigation by Ernst von Lössel.

At the end of June 1916 twelve prototype Albatros D-type scouts including at least one D.II and a number of D.IIs were ordered by the *Idflieg*. In early July a production order for 100 machines was signed off, of which the first fifty would be Albatros D.Is (D.422/16 to 471/16) and the second fifty would be D.IIs (D472/16 to 521/16). A month later in August another fifty D.IIs were ordered and assigned to the company's

**Below: Albatros D.I 446/16 of an unknown unit and location. Part of the production batch of 50 D.I aircraft ordered in early July 1916**





**Right: This well-known photograph shows Oswald Boelcke in front of what is thought to be his Albatros D.II 386/16. Note the streamer attached the rear port side interplane strut**

with streamline propeller boss, apparently single seater, but firing both in front and over the tail from what appeared to be a rear mounting on the left hand side. The tailplane was very large and rounded, not a fish tail. The HA kept above the de Hs (De Havillands) diving, firing and climbing again. The encounter lasted 30 minutes, during which time Capt. Andrews and Lt. Glew were only able to fire a few shots, owing to their inferior position underneath, and their inability to out-climb the hostile machines. At 12.40pm the HA turned away East.'

According to the report one of these new aircraft returned ten minutes later: 'At 12.50pm 1 HA returned, and was engaged over Curlu at 7,000ft. Capt. Andrews dived and fired a double drum at it at 100 yds range. The HA dived steeply into a cloud pursued by Capt. Andrews. Lt. Glew who was above Capt. Andrews, dived over the cloud and attacked the hostile machine as it emerged from the cloud, still diving steeply. He fired half a drum at close range, about 20 yards, and left it in a nose dive over Clery.'

The hostile aircraft in question were almost certainly Albatros fighters, although where these came from is a mystery. Many historians have suggested that the Albatroses originated from Jagdstaffel 1 at Bertincourt. If three Albatros fighters had arrived at Bertincourt at the end of August as the report from Andrews suggests, then it is unknown what happened to them after this date. We know that the very next day Offz Stv Leopold Reiman transferred from Jagdstaffel

**Below: Albatros D.I 435/16 with what appears to be a two colour camouflaged finish. D.I 435/16 has been said to have been flown by Lt. Karl Spitzhof, but it is not known with any degree of certainty to which unit this aircraft belonged**



1 to Jagdstaffel 2 at the same time delivering an Albatros D.I in to the care of Boelcke's unit based at the edge of Vélou woods. It is easy to assume that one of the three Albatroses that Capt. Andrews described went to Jasta 2 on 1st September, although this may not be the case and it is just as probable that Reiman delivered an Albatros directly from a local flugpark.

We can only guess that the Albatros delivered in to Boelcke's hands at the beginning of September was used to allow the pilots and ground crew of Jasta 2 to familiarise themselves with the aircraft in readiness for an anticipated delivery of production aircraft. Certainly there is no indication that the Albatros was used in combat during this period and Boelcke himself continued to use his recently

delivered Fokker D.III, 352/16. We do know that on 16th September a group of pilots from Jagdstaffel 2 including Erin Böhme collected five brand new Albatros D.Is and one D.II from Armee Flug Park 1. Böhme wrote to his future fiancée Annamari Brüning about the event: 'Our machines have finally arrived, only six for the time being; we fetched them from Cambrai on Saturday.'

Böhme was overjoyed with the new aircraft: 'Our new machines likewise border on marvellous. They are far improved over the single seaters we flew at Verdun. Their climb rate and manoeuvrability are astonishing – it is as if they were living, feeling beings that understand what their master wishes. With them, one can dare and achieve everything.'







## FIRST BLOOD

On the morning of 17th September Oswald Boelcke, who had claimed the D.II 386/16 as his personal aircraft, wrote: *'The Staffel is not quite up to strength yet, as I am still without about half our machines. But yesterday at least six arrived, so that I shall be able to take off with my Staffel for the first time today. Hitherto I have generally flown Fokker biplanes, but today I shall take up one of the new Albatroses. My pilots are all passionately keen and very competent, but I must first train*

**Below: The remains of Albatros D.I D424/16 at Flugpark 6 in Valenciennes. The aircraft side-slipped out of a vertical bank at low altitude during a test flight on 26th September 1916. Its pilot, the Eindecker Ace Lt. Max von Mulzer did not survive the accident**

*them to steady teamwork – they are at present rather like young puppies in their zeal to achieve something.'*

The previous evening Otto Höhne was credited with the first victory for a Jasta 2 pilot other than Oswald Boelcke when he shot down an FE2b west of Marcoing. It has been suggested that this may have been the first time that an Allied aircraft became a victim of the Albatros but letters from both Boelcke and Böhme are clear that the newly arrived Albatroses were not flown in combat until the following morning.

Likewise Erin Böhme is credited as downing a Sopwith Strutter at 07.45 hours in the morning of the 17th September, although Böhme's own account of the day's events to Annamarie suggests that this victory may not

**Above: This photograph showing three Jasta 2 Albatros D.I aircraft preparing for take-off is claimed to have been taken on 28th October 1916 just prior to the action in which Erwin Böhme and Oswald Boelcke collided, resulting in Boelcke's death. Note that the fuselage finish on all three of these aircraft appears to have been stained in a dark colour**

have been achieved in an Albatros as he writes: *'We tried them (the Albatros fighters) for the first time on Sunday morning, when we came across an English squadron of eight large biplanes, and finished off six of them – one each; only two got away.'*

The battle that Böhme refers to occurred at around 11.00am on the morning of the 17th when five Albatroses of Jasta 2 consisting of Boelcke's D.II and four D.Is flown by Böhme, Richthofen, Max Müller and Hans Reimann







**Above: An impressive study of a D.II in flight**

engaged a large formation of enemy BE bombers being escorted by FE.2s west of Marcoing. Officially three FE.2bs were credited to *Jasta 2* pilots; Boelcke, Richthofen and Reimann. A fourth FE2b was credited to Lt Wilhelm Frankl flying a Fokker D.I, who joined the fight with some of his fellow pilots from *Jasta 4*. Two BE s were also known to have been downed during the engagement but were uncredited.

The action is not only significant as the first time that a victory can directly be attributed to an Albatros, but also as the first victory accredited to Manfred von Richthofen who later recorded in his book, *Der Rote Kampfflieger* (The Red Air Fighter): *'The next morning, the seventeenth of September, was a gloriously fine day. It was therefore only to be expected that the English would be very active. Before we started Boelcke repeated to us his instructions and for the first time we flew as a squadron commanded by the great man whom we followed blindly.'*

*We had just arrived at the Front when we recognized a hostile flying squadron that was proceeding in the direction of Cambrai. Boelcke was of course the first to see it, for he saw a great deal more than ordinary mortals. Soon we understood the position and each one of us strove to follow Boelcke closely. It was clear to all of us that we should pass our first examination under the eyes of our beloved leader.*

*Slowly we approached the hostile squadron. It could not escape us. We had intercepted it, for we were between the Front and our opponents. If they wished to go back they had to pass us. We counted the hostile machines. They were seven in number. We were only five. All the Englishmen flew large bomb-carrying two-seaters. In a few seconds*

*the dance would begin.*

*Boelcke had come very near the first English machine but he did not yet shoot. I followed. Close to me were my comrades. The Englishman nearest to me was travelling in a large boat painted with dark colours. I did not reflect very long but took my aim and shot. He also fired and so did I and both of us missed our aim. A struggle began and the great point for me was to get to the rear of the fellow because I could only shoot forward with my gun. He was differently placed for his machine gun was movable. It could fire in all directions.*

*Apparently he was no beginner, for he knew exactly that his last hour had arrived at the moment when I got at the back of him. At that time I had not yet the conviction 'He must fall!' which I have now on such occasions, but on the contrary, I was curious to see whether he would fall. There is a great difference between the two feelings. When one has shot down one's first, second or third opponent, then one begins to find out how the trick is done.*

*My Englishman twisted and turned, going criss-cross. I did not think for a moment that the hostile squadron contained other Englishmen who conceivably might come to the aid of their comrade. I was animated by a single thought: 'The man in front of me must come down, whatever happens.' At last a favourable moment arrived. My opponent had apparently lost sight of me. Instead of twisting and turning he flew straight along. In a fraction of a second I was at his back with my excellent machine. I gave a short series of shots with my machine gun. I had gone so close that I was afraid I might dash into the Englishman. Suddenly, I nearly yelled with joy for the propeller of the enemy machine had*

*stopped turning. I had shot his engine to pieces; the enemy was compelled to land, for it was impossible for him to reach his own lines. The English machine was curiously swinging to and fro. Probably something had happened to the pilot. The observer was no longer visible. His machine gun was apparently deserted. Obviously I had hit the observer and he had fallen from his seat.'*

The pilot of the stricken FE2b, 2nd Lt. Lionel Morris managed to land the aircraft. His observer, Tom Rees, had died in the air. Morris was badly wounded and later died at Cambrai hospital.

Just prior to the demise of Richthofen's quarry, Boelcke attained his twenty seventh confirmed victory in his new D.II: *'I engaged the leader's machine, which I recognised by its streamers and forced it down. My opponent landed at Equancourt and promptly set fire to his machine. The inmates were taken prisoner; one of them was slightly wounded. The pilot had to land because I had shot his engine to pieces.'*

According to records Reimann's FE came down near Trescault at about the same time as Boelcke's victim was shot down.

Assuming that Böhme's victory earlier in the day was not achieved in an Albatros, then either Boelcke's or Reimann's victory on 17th September could be considered as a strong contender for being the first time an Albatros downed an enemy aircraft. Ignoring the time recorded on *Staffel* claim records, we know without doubt that Boelcke's victory was achieved before Richthofen's. This is because the pilot of Boelcke's vanquished FE2b, Captain David Gray later stated that, *'after landing I saw another one of our machines*



**Above: An interesting photograph of Albatros D.II 484/16 with its metal nose panel and cowling missing. 484/16 was one of the first shared batch of D.Is and D.IIs ordered in early July 1916**

come down and disappear behind the trees about 500 yards from us.'

Gray later confirms that this aircraft was Richthofen's quarry when he writes that: 'The car drew up and I gathered from the German officer that the observer was killed and the pilot injured and had already been removed in an ambulance.'

On return to their aerodrome the Pilots of *Jasta 2* celebrated the events of the day as Böhme related: 'On Sunday afternoon our as-yet-incomplete fighter squadron had a small party to celebrate its inauguration and the day's first successes.'

The day's events were significant enough to concern allied pilots stationed in the area as Fred Libby of 11 Squadron related: 'This morning Boelcke and his crew went in to action on our C flight. I knew it was too good to last.' Libby continues: 'Now with Mr Boelcke and his new faster machines, we will really catch hell.'

In comparison to the British de Havilland pusher, the Albatros was an extremely strong and powerful aircraft that had a good rate of climb and was more heavily armed, but ultimately was less manoeuvrable. The superior power of the Albatros' inline 160hp engine gave it an advantage in combat over its more manoeuvrable opponents because in an extended dogfight an experienced Albatros pilot was able to breakaway and attack at will, while its opponent often found themselves locked into a dogfight and unable to escape unless the enemy lost interest or ran low on fuel. The aircraft's superior rate of climb meant that an experienced Albatros pilot would always have a big advantage of fighting from the high ground during combat.

Edmund Lewis, an experienced pilot from 32 Squadron, summed up the problem when on 18th October 1916 he wrote: 'The Huns still keep to their side of the lines while we venture over their lines but if they wished they

could sit over our aerodrome (with their fast machines) and we could do nothing against them. What I mean is that a DH is no longer attacking, but is fighting for its life against those fast Huns.'

Boelcke would increase his tally of victory claims two days later when he downed a Morane Saulnier from 60 Squadron: 'The fat Gitterschwänze (pushers) were below, with the Moranes above as cover. I engaged one of the latter and pranced about the air with him. He escaped me for a moment, but I got to grips with him again west of Bapaume – one of my guns jammed, but the other shot all the better. I shot up the monoplane from close range until he broke up in flames and fell in to fragments into the woods near Grévillers.'

Hans Reimann and Otto Höhne also added to their tally on 19th September each bringing down a BE.12, part of a group of 19 and 21 Squadron aircraft that were bombing the aerodromes at Velu and Bertincourt.

*Jagdstaffel 2* began moving to new premises in Lagnicourt, eight kilometres north of Bertincourt, on the evening of 22nd September. The following day the unit's Albatroses were flying again with both Richthofen and Reimann having confirmed victories. Hans Reimann, however did not survive the day having collided with a Martinsyde G100 flown by Lt. Leslie Forbes shortly after he had attained his fourth victory. It has been claimed that Forbes deliberately rammed into Reimann's Albatros. The RFC Patrol leaders report for that day stated that: 'One Martinsyde was observed to collide with a hostile machine and both fell to the ground out of control.'

In fact Forbes managed to fly his limping machine back across the line. Crashing his Martinsyde into a tree, Forbes survived the experience. The loss of Hans Reimann is the first recorded incident in which an Albatros was downed.

By the end of September, at least eleven of the twenty one victories accredited to *Jasta 2* in that month were achieved in Albatroses, with both Boelcke and Richthofen attaining three victories apiece. Boelcke's twenty ninth victory was achieved on 27th September when he downed a Martinsyde of 27 Squadron. A second Martinsyde from the same squadron was credited to the *Staffel* rather than an individual.

Richthofen's third victory came on Saturday 30th September when he and four other pilots from *Jasta 2* attacked a group of FE2bs above the aerodrome at Lagnicourt: 'I singled out a machine and after some 200 shots the enemy plane started gliding down in the direction of Cambrai. Finally it began to draw circles. The shooting had stopped and I saw that the machine was flying uncontrolled.'

The final day of September was also significant in that *Jasta 2* lost its third pilot, the second from *Jasta 2* to be lost while flying an Albatros. Lt Ernst Diener was shot down by a French Nieuport Scout. It is believed that he was the victim of René Dorme of *Escadrille 3*.

Diener was in fact the third pilot known to have lost his life in an Albatros. On 26th September, four days after Hans Reimann had collided with Forbes, Lt Max von Mulzer, a *Pour le Mérite* Ace who at the time was assigned to FA 32 was testing out an Albatros D.I at *Flugpark 6* in Valenciennes, when he side slipped the aircraft in to a side bank at low altitude and lost control.

Allegedly shortly before taking off in the D.I, Mulzer was heard to remark: 'Immelmann is dead, Parshau is dead, Wintgens is dead. Now I am next in line.'



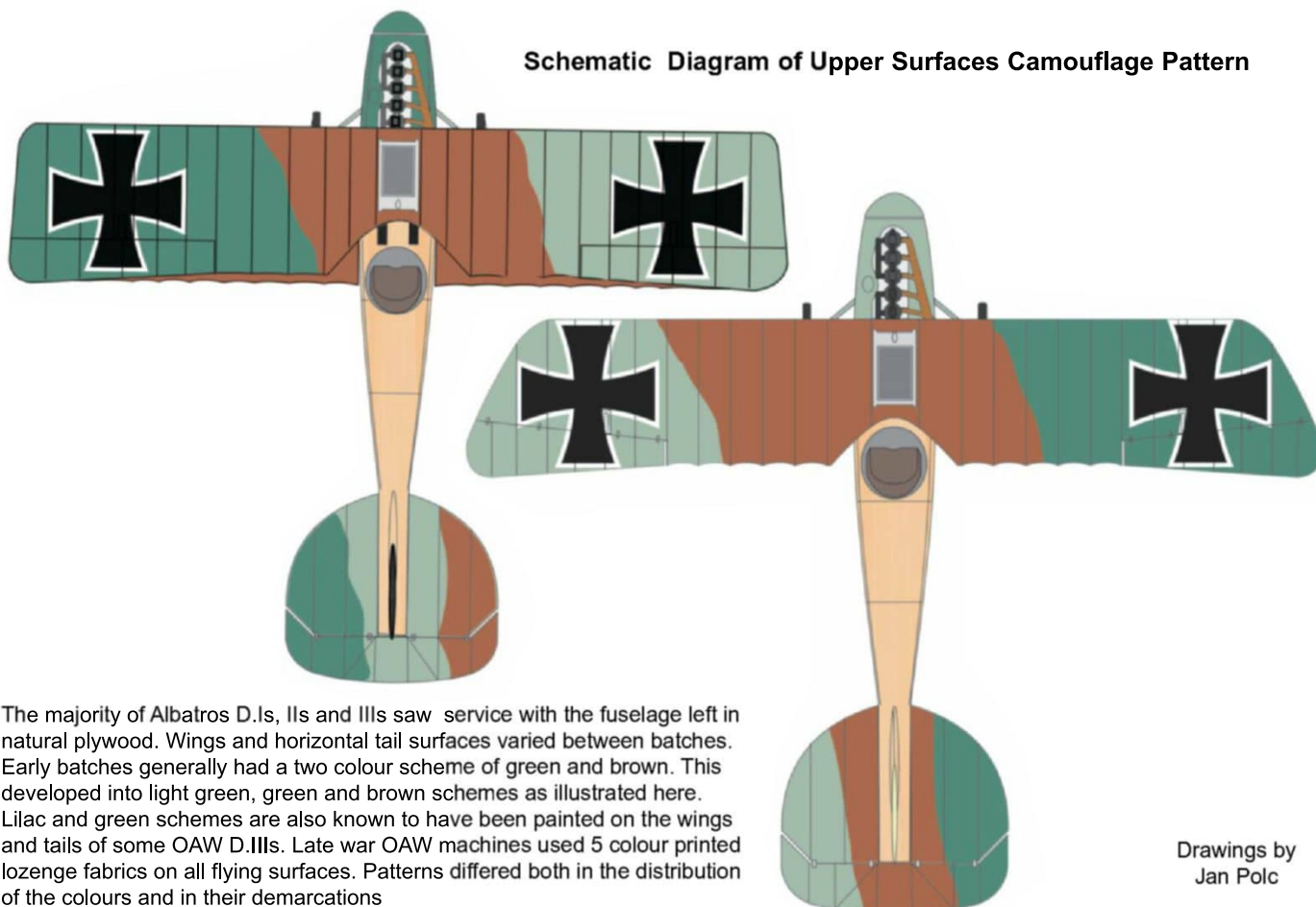


**Albatros D.II** flown by Lt. d R Wilhelm Leusch, *Jasta 19*, Les Mesnil, April 1917. Leusch would later become *Staffel* commander of *Jasta 19*.



**Albatros D.II** flown by Vzfw. Rudolf Weckbrodt, *Jasta 26*, 1916. Natural plywood fuselage with camouflaged wings and horizontal tail surfaces

### Schematic Diagram of Upper Surfaces Camouflage Pattern



The majority of Albatros D.Is, IIs and IIIs saw service with the fuselage left in natural plywood. Wings and horizontal tail surfaces varied between batches. Early batches generally had a two colour scheme of green and brown. This developed into light green, green and brown schemes as illustrated here. Lilac and green schemes are also known to have been painted on the wings and tails of some OAW D.IIIs. Late war OAW machines used 5 colour printed lozenge fabrics on all flying surfaces. Patterns differed both in the distribution of the colours and in their demarcations

Drawings by  
Jan Polc



## OCTOBER – A MONTH OF SUCCESSES, ENDING IN TRAGEDY

*Jagdstaffel 6* became the second unit known to have received production Albatroses. The D.Is, which replaced the unit's worn out Fokker monoplanes, arrived a few days before the *Staffel* moved from Jametz to Ugný l'Équippe on the French sector of the Somme. Vfw Carl Holler, a pilot with the *Jagdstaffel*, was unable to contain his enthusiasm for the new fighter: 'Its rate of climb was excellent – it was child's play to reach 5,000 metres. Because of its heavy inline engine, it had a tremendous diving speed, which gave us great advantage when attacking the enemy flying below.'

Meanwhile, on the British sector of the Somme the pilots and ground crew of *Jagdstaffel 2* were kept busy as the British began an assault on the Ancre Heights, a battle that would last for five weeks.

On 1st October Oswald Boelcke raised his score to thirty in his D.II when he brought down a BE2c, northwest of Flers. His thirty first victory came on 7th October when he shot down a Nieuport two seater east of Morval. Richthofen also scored his fourth victory on the same day when he brought down a BE.12 near Rancourt: 'After 400 shots the enemy plane dashed downwards, the pilot having been mortally wounded.'

During this period some of the *Jasta 2* Albatroses appear to have been overpainted in a dark colour, possibly brown. It is believed that a white stripe was painted on the nose of the fuselage of Richthofen's D.I, which was perhaps one of the earliest known examples of a personalised Albatros.

The German Army Air Service underwent a radical re-organisation on 8th October: 'Owing to the increased importance of the air war, all the air combat and air defences resources of the army in the field and at home

are to be united under one service branch'.

General Ernst von Hoeppener was chosen to be *Kommandierender General der Luftstreitkräfte*, while *Oberstleutnant* Hermann Thomsen became Hoeppener's chief of staff. By this time further *Jagdstaffeln* had been formed, some of which had either mobilised or in were in the process of mobilising. One such unit was *Jagdstaffel 10* who began operations on 6th October with various machines, including two Albatros D.IIs. There would be twenty five operational *Jastas* in place by the end of 1916.

Three days later on 10th October the pilots of *Jagdstaffel 2* claimed another four victims. Boelcke again struck, this time bringing down a DH2 from 32 Squadron. Erin Böhme brought down his second confirmed kill, an FE2b which came down behind Allied lines and as such wasn't officially credited to Böhme until later that month. Max von Müller scored his first: 'We flew under the leadership of Oberleutnant Kiermeier in pursuit of six Englishmen in the direction of Cambrai. There we encountered four enemy machines with which, as we heard later, a Geschwader under Richthofen had already fought. I flew farthest north and attacked the one nearest to me, an F.E. two seater. Obviously he was no longer entirely whole from the previous fight, because he soon began to spiral down in an easterly direction. When I saw that he wanted to fly back to the front, I didn't let him go and hammered away at him until he burned up completely and crashed at V (Vraucourt) in the Somme. I landed right next to him. It was a terrible sight.'

The other victory of 10th October, a Sopwith 1½ Strutter, was claimed by Lnt Hans Imelmann, a new pilot who had recently arrived at Lagnicourt.

The *Staffel* claimed another four credited victories on the 16th October, Boelcke and Richthofen again adding to their tallies, while

Above: From left to right; Stefan Kirmaier, Hans Imelmann, Manfred von Richthofen and Hans Wortman of *Jasta 2* in front of what is believed to be Richthofen's D.II 481/16. Note that this aircraft was overpainted in a dark colour. This photo must have been taken early to mid November sometime between Wortman's arrival at *Jasta 2* and Kirmaier's death on the 22nd November

Leopold Reimann brought down his first for the *Staffel* when he engaged a BE2c south west of Thiépval. Boelcke claimed two scalps on this day. The first was a BE2c that came down at Hébuterne. The second that occurred later in the day was a DH2 of 24 Squadron: 'We ran into six Vickers single seaters south of Bapaume at 17.45hrs. We went into some fine turns. The English leader, with streamers on his machine, came right for me. I settled him with my first attack – apparently the pilot was killed, for the machine spun down.'

The second half of October brought even more success for the pilots of *Jasta 2* so that by the end of the month a further nineteen confirmed victories were credited to the *Staffel*. Erin Böhme added a further two claims to his tally while Müller, Richthofen, Höhne, Reimann and Imelmann also increased their scores. Oberleutnant Stefan Kirmaier, one of *Jasta 2*'s October arrivals, opened his score on 17th October when he claimed an FE northeast of Bapaume and would have another three confirmed victories by the end of October.

Oswald Boelcke took his tally to forty on 26th October: 'About 4.45 seven of our machines of which I had charge attacked some English biplanes west of P (Puisieux). I attacked one and wounded the observer, so he was unable to fire at me. At the second attack the machine started to smoke. Both pilot and observer seemed dead. It fell into the second line of English trenches and burned up.'

This would be Boelcke's last victory as two days later tragedy occurred during a fight with a patrol of DH2s from 24 Squadron. Erin



Böhme recounts: 'On Saturday afternoon we were sitting in our little airfield hut on alert readiness. I had begun a game of chess with Boelcke when we were called to the front shortly after 4.00 on account of an infantry attack. As usual, Boelcke led us himself. We soon arrived over Flers and attacked some English aircraft, fast single seaters, who capably defended themselves. In the fierce dogfight that followed, in which we were only able to shoot for short periods we tried to force the opponent down by alternately blocking his escape, as we had successfully done so often before. Boelcke and I had just gotten one Englishman between us when another opponent, chased by friend Richthofen, cut across our path. Boelcke and I momentarily lost sight of one another when our wings obscured us during mutual, lightning quick attempt to avoid each other – and this was the cause of it.

How can I describe my emotions from that moment forward when Boelcke suddenly emerged a few meters to my right, pushed his machine and I pulled mine up, yet we still touched and both fell to earth. It was only a light contact, but it became a violent impact due to the terrific speed. Fate, more often than not, can be so cruelly irrational in her choices: for me, it was only one side of my undercarriage that was torn away, but for him it was the extreme tip of his left wing.'

Böhme managed to regain control of his aircraft and followed Boelcke's stricken aircraft which was coming down in a 'gradual dive': 'But when he went in to a cloud layer

farther down below, his machine dipped more and more steeply due to the strong gusts, and I had to watch how he was no longer able to straighten out for a landing and how he impacted next to a battery position.'

Manfred von Richthofen, who had witnessed the event from his aircraft later recalled: 'The struggle began in the usual way. Boelcke tackled the one and I the other. I had to let go because one of the German machines got in my way. I looked around and noticed Boelcke settling his victim about two hundred yards away from me. It was the usual thing. Boelcke would shoot down his opponent and I had to look on. Close to Boelcke flew a good friend of his. It was an interesting struggle. Both men were shooting. It was probable that the Englishman would fall at any moment. Suddenly I noticed an unnatural movement of the two German flying machines. Immediately I thought: Collision. I had not yet seen a collision in the air. I had imagined that it would look quite different. In reality, what happened was not a collision. The two machines merely touched one another. However, if two machines go at the tremendous pace of flying machines, the slightest contact has the effect of a violent concussion.'

Erin Böhme was naturally devastated by the turn of events. Even though he was quickly exonerated of any blame, he was so distraught that he did not attend Boelcke's memorial service on the last day of the month.

Of Boelcke, Richthofen later wrote: 'It is a strange thing that everybody who met Boelcke imagined that he alone was his true friend. I have made the acquaintance of about forty men, each of whom imagined that he alone was Boelcke's intimate. Each imagined that he had the monopoly of Boelcke's affections. Men whose names were unknown to Boelcke believed that he was particularly fond of them. This is a curious phenomenon which I have never noticed in anyone else. Boelcke had not a personal enemy. He was equally polite to everybody, making no differences.'

**Below: On 16th November 1916 Albatros D.I 391/116 flown by Leutnant Karl Büttner of Jasta 2 was brought down intact by the British and allocated the number G1. Here we see that the British have over painted the German markings with British ones. The band around the fuselage behind Bü has been added after capture. Note that the fuselage of 391/116 appeared to have been over painted in a dark colour (probably brown) rather than stained, as can be seen by the colour of the metal cowl. The British later completely over painted the aircraft in one colour, possibly PC10**



Production of the Albatros fighters continued at pace and so throughout the autumn more of the type were supplied to the *Jagdstaffeln* on the front line. By the beginning of November fifty D.Is and twenty eight D.IIs were listed on the frontline inventory. At this time *Jasta* 2 and *Jasta* 6 were the only units where the majority of their aircraft were Albatroses. Most other units that had mobilised by the beginning of November either primarily operated Halberstadts or Fokkers, or contained a potpourri of aircraft types including one or two Albatroses.

*Jasta* 6 opened up their account on 20th October when Vfw Christian Kress brought down a Morane Type P two seater. Kress notched up a second victory for the *Staffel* on 2nd November but eight days later became the nineteenth victim of the great French ace Georges Guynemer, when he was taken by surprise from above. One of Kress's colleagues, Vfw Carl Holler, who was so generous with his praise of the Albatros when they had arrived a month earlier, was in no doubt where the blame lay: 'Unfortunately, the casualty was the result of a technical defect in the design of the aircraft. The top wing blocked the pilot's view for about 30 degrees forward and above.'

By this time the pilots of *Jasta* 6 had achieved six victories. In addition to Kress's two confirmed victories Ltn Friedrich Mallinckrodt and Ltn Roland Nauck were both credited with one victory each while the *Jagdstaffel* CO, Rittm Josef Wulff, downed two enemy aircraft, including a Caudron R.4 on 9th November.

At Lagincourt, Stefan Kirmaier succeeded Boelcke as commander of the *Jasta* 2 and under his leadership the unit continued to flourish. Within the first five days of the month the *Staffel* had added a further six confirmed claims to their tally. On 9th November the pilots of the *Jagdstaffel* were joined by *Jasta* 1 when they engaged a large



**Above: Albatros D.II 1712/16 was flown by Georg Strasser in Jasta 17 from November 1916 up until mid February 1917**

*slightest intention of breaking off the fight. He was travelling in a machine which turned beautifully. However, my own was better at rising than his, and I succeeded at last in getting above and beyond my English waltzing partner.*

*When we had got down to about 6,000 feet without having achieved anything in particular, my opponent ought to have discovered that it was time for him to take his leave. The wind was favourable to me for it drove us more and more towards the German position. At last we were above Bapaume, about half a mile behind the German front. The impertinent fellow was full of cheek and when we had got down to about 3,000 feet he merrily waved to me as if he would say, 'Well, how do you do?'*

*After an extended fight, with fuel running low, Hawker made a desperate dash for Allied lines: 'When he had come down to about three hundred feet he tried to escape by flying in a zigzag course during which, as is well known, it is difficult for an observer to shoot. That was my most favourable moment. I followed him at an altitude from two hundred and fifty feet to one hundred and fifty feet, firing all the time. The Englishman could not help falling. But the jamming of my gun nearly robbed me of my success.'*

Hawker, the renowned English seven time ace and commander of 24 Squadron, was shot through the head and came down near the remains of Luisenhof farm, south of Bapaume.

Richthofen later wrote in his autobiography: *'I was extremely proud when, one fine day, I was informed that the airman whom I had brought down on the twenty third of November, 1916, was the English Immelmann.'*

The Somme offensive officially ended with the close of the Battle of Ancre on 18th November, by which time the German units in the area had addressed the balance of air power that was so much in the Allied favour at the beginning of the campaign. The increasing numbers of D-type scouts including Albatroses had played a large part in this turnaround of fortunes.

**Left: An Albatros D.II of Jasta 19 with damaged undercarriage is being pushed in to its hanger. The fuselage stripes were black and white**



formation of bombers and escorts that were carrying out a raid on an ammunition dump at Vraucourt, northeast of Bapaume. The sky was filled with flying machines as thirty or so German fighters pounced on twenty eight Allied aircraft.

The first casualty was suffered by 60 Squadron soon after the trenches were crossed. Lieutenant A. Bell-Irving was wounded in the leg but he was able to land near the trenches, where his aeroplane was wrecked. Meanwhile the remainder of the escorting machines were fighting hard to protect the bombers, but two of these, both from 12 Squadron, were shot down, and the pilot of another was wounded. Two of the escorts, both DH2s of 29 Squadron were brought down by several fighters while one of the FEs of 11 Squadron, with a dead observer and a wounded pilot, crashed in no man's land and the pilot escaped to the trenches.

The six aircraft were all victims of *Jasta* 2 with Richthofen, Kirmaier, Imelmann and Höhne all adding to their existing scores, while newly arrived Hans Wortman dispatched his first. Erin Böhme, who had recovered from the events at the end of October, brought down the *Jagdstaffel's* final victim of the day.

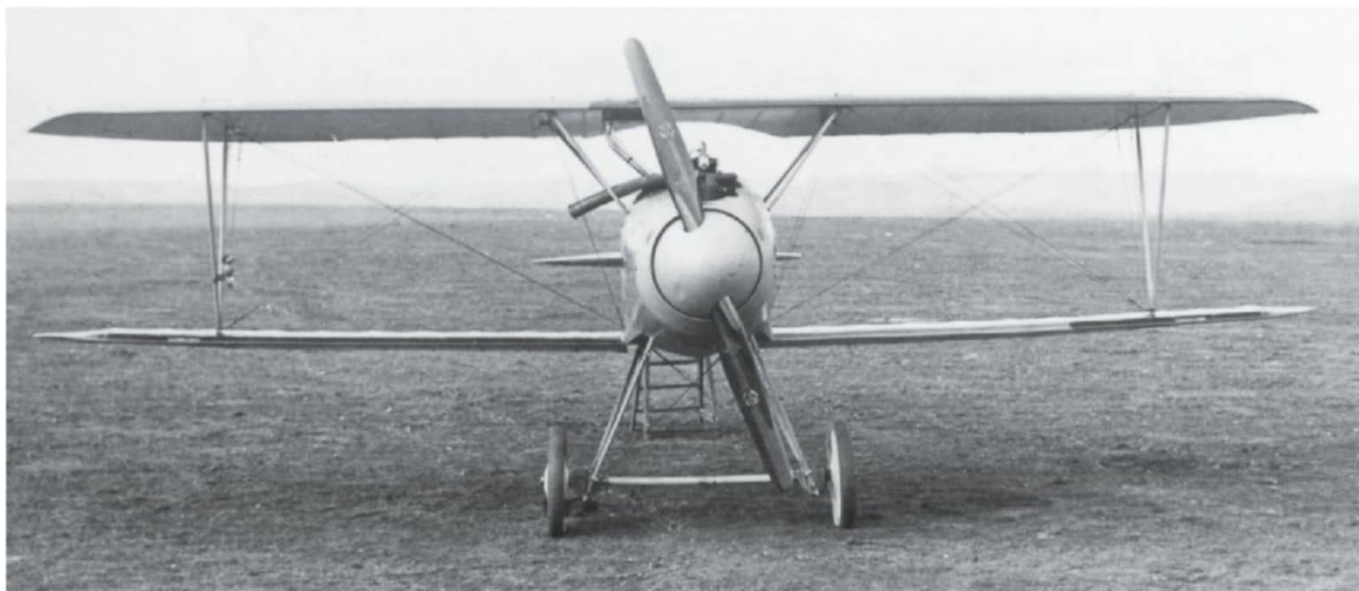
By 20th November another six victories were recorded. However on 16th November Albatros D.I, 391/116 flown by Leutnant Karl Büttner was brought down intact behind British lines providing the RFC, and later Aeronautical publications including *Flight*,

with much valuable technical information.

Stefan Kirmaier became the second commanding officer of *Jagdstaffel* 2 to fall when on 22nd November he became the seventh victim of Captain John Andrews of 24 Squadron. Karl Bodenschatz temporarily replaced Kirmaier as CO until Hauptmann Franz Josef Walz took up the post permanently at the end of the month.

On the same day that the *Jasta* lost Kirmaier, Manfred von Richthofen scored his tenth victory with the unit. It was however his next encounter, a day later, that is perhaps the most celebrated of Richthofen's early career within *Jasta* 2. In the early afternoon of 23rd November a patrol consisting of three DH2s from 24 Squadron, flown by Major Lanoe Hawker, Capt. John Andrews and Lieut. Robert Saundby encountered two German machines near Bapaume and drove them eastward. During the attack Andrews noticed two 'strong patrols' of German aircraft above him and broke off, however on seeing Hawker continue to press the attack apparently unaware of the hostiles above Andrew's rejoined the fray. Four D.IIs and D.Is lead by Richthofen dived down on to the 24 Squadron de Havillands and what Saundby later described as a 'violent fight' ensued. During the battle Richthofen became entwined in a dogfight with Hawker: *'First we circled twenty times to the left, and then thirty times to the right. Each tried to get behind and above the other. Soon I discovered that I was not meeting a beginner. He had not the*





**Above: An Albatros D.III photographed from the front providing a good view of the slight angle of incidence of the lower wings**

By the end of the Somme offensive *Jasta* 2 was operating a mixture of production D.IIs and D.Is, while more and more *Jagdstaffeln* included Albatroses within their inventory. At the close of 1916 it is known that at least some Albatroses were present in *Jasta* 2, by now renamed *Jasta Boelcke* in honour of the great man, 4, 6, 10, 14, 17 and 19.

*Jasta* 17 became operational on 7th November and had at least a few D.IIs in its inventory at this time, although like many *Jagdstaffeln* had to be content with a variety of aircraft including some obsolete Fokker monoplanes. Julius Buckler, who later wrote of his experiences in *Jasta* 17, became the first member of the unit to achieve a victory: *'It was a winter day like any other when I took off in clear weather in a new machine, an Albatros D.II, in order – driven by my demon – to scour the sky for the enemy, of whom I dreamt day and night'*.

Buckler encountered a French lattice tailed aircraft likely to have been a Caudron G.4 below him: *'Without much deliberation I put my machine on its nose and raced past our observation aircraft in to the depths below. That I did not ram the Farman remains a mystery to me. I sped past him too. Missed! What was the meaning of this? I really was a fool. I tore the machine around on its wingtips, and now began the game of turning.'*

*Umpteen times I sped by the Farman and fired for all I was worth. Finally I noticed that the observer was no longer to be seen. Where was he? Was he hiding, wounded or dead? Then I saw the lattice tail aircraft tilt and begin to spin. I stuck doggedly behind him. A*

*cloud of dust; the aircraft burst apart and was scattered into pieces.'*

A second victory for the *Staffel* came on Christmas Eve when Georg Strasser shot down a Caudron which fell in flames near Aspach.

By the end of December the German Air Service frontline inventory included a total of 214 D.IIs and 39 D.Is. Perhaps of more significance was the arrival of a new type of Albatros, which was already beginning to filter out to some of the *Jastas*.

### THE ALBATROS D.III

During World War I German design bureaus were not averse to imitating Allied designs, often at the instigation of the *Idflieg*. A well-known example of this was the German Triplane craze of 1917/18 which originated from a desire to reproduce what were perceived to be superior qualities of the Sopwith Triplane.

In a similar manner the early Nieuport aircraft and in particular the Nieuport 11 provided inspiration for many German fighter designs. Design bureaus including those at Albatros Werke were encouraged by the *Idflieg* to incorporate the Nieuport sesquiplane 'one-and-half wing' configuration in to their designs, partly because of the improvement to the pilot's downward view and partly because of a perception that the configuration provided aero technical advantages.

The result was the Albatros D.III, which retained a plywood covered fuselage that was

very similar to that of its predecessors, but had a dramatically redesigned upper and lower wing section. The upper wing span was increased and the wing tip shape redesigned giving the tips a more curved and streamlined appearance. In contrast the chord of the lower wings was reduced significantly with the structure of the lower wing built around a single spar. The unbalanced ailerons on the upper wing had a greater inverse taper than those on the earlier Albatroses. The D.III retained the Teves and Braun wing mounted radiator used on the later D.IIs, which was initially mounted in the centre of the upper wing, but was later moved offset from centre following complaints of poor forward visibility. Other than the wings themselves, the most notable difference between the D.III and its predecessors was the V shaped Nieuport style interplane struts.

As with the earlier Albatroses, very little documentation remains concerning the development of the D.III. It is believed that the prototype was constructed in late July or early August although we do know that the Albatros design bureau headed up by Thelan proposed a change of the *Idflieg* acceptance specifications based on trials that had been carried out on a captured Nieuport. It is thought that three prototypes were produced; D.387/16, D.388/16 and D.389/16, which are believed to be part of the initial twelve Albatros prototypes ordered by the *Idflieg* at the end of June.

According to Peter Grosz, the first known official reference to the D.III was on 22nd September 1916 when one of these prototypes, D.388/16, was subjected to static load testing at Aldershof. During this testing the wing static load test failed the requirements for pulling out of a dive and gliding (30% angled) flight, although a later retest that day after modifications were made came close to the specified load factor of 3.5

**Left: A close-up photograph of D767/17 with Leut Oscar Seitz's personal markings. The S appears to be a slightly different shade to the black of the crosses suggesting that it was perhaps red. The harlequin pattern seen on the fin is blue and white imitating the national Bavarian Staatsflagge**



**Right: The comet insignia suggests that this aircraft was flown by Leut Harald Auffahrt during his time with either Jasta 18 or Jasta 29**

for gliding flight. Further testing must have been carried out at a later date, but no records survive to confirm the dates. It is known that the tail plane section including the fin, rudder, horizontal stabilizer and elevator were tested on 3-4th October, meeting the minimum requirements with ease.

In October it was reported that Albatros Werke 'had brought out the Nieuport biplane as the D.III. Powered by a 160hp Mercedes, the D.III had attained very good performance, reaching 5,000 metres in 24 minutes. Top speed attained was about 170-180 km/hr. Static tests and series production is being accelerated.'

Shortly after this the *Idflieg* submitted an unprecedented order for 400 machines (1910-2309/16), the first of which began arriving at the front towards the end of December 1916.

The first D.IIIs known to arrive at the front did so on 21st December, becoming part of *Jasta 24* prior to the unit's mobilisation at the end of the month.



The D.III was initially well received by those that flew them, with reports that the aircraft was easy to fly with an outstanding performance. However on 17th January, *Armee Oberkommado 2* reported 'rib fractures and breakage of the leading edge on

a number of Albatroses as a result of turning manoeuvres and diving flights.'

Six days later, on 23rd January *Leutnant* Roland Nauck, a pilot from *Jasta 6* was engaging a Spad when his lower right wing began to lose fabric, while the wing spar came loose and detached. Somehow Nauck, who had been wounded during the engagement, managed to bring his machine safely down behind the German lines. The following day none other than Manfred von Richthofen, now flying as commander of *Jagdstaffel 11*, had similar problems with the D.III he was flying: 'As I shot down my eighteenth, one of my wings broke in two during the air battle at 300 metre altitude. It was only through a miracle that I reached the ground without going kaput.'

Three days later on 27th January the D.III was grounded pending investigation by *Idflieg* engineers. Load tests carried out on five wings were inconclusive as all the examples achieved loading specifications. Meanwhile, Albatros engineers had developed reinforcement braces designed to be fitted to the lower wing and these were supplied to grounded aircraft at the front.

In the absence of any conclusive evidence of a weakness in the wing structure the order for grounding was rescinded on 19th February, but problems with the wing structure continued to be reported.

The *Idflieg* ordered more production D.IIIIs in February and March, two orders of fifty aircraft each. As Albatros Werke geared up for the D.V, production of the D.III shifted to Ostdeutsche Albatros Werke GmbH (OAW) who fulfilled a further four orders commissioned between April and August 1917 of 838 machines. In total 1,346 D.IIIIs were ordered by *Idflieg* and the type would continue to be in use throughout the remainder of the war.

The D.III changed very little during its production life. There were variations of the radiator position including some aircraft that featured two wing mounted radiators. Some late production OAW D.IIIIs also acquired the more rounded, D.V style of fin and rudder.

**Above left: Some D.IIIIs were fitted with two wing mounted radiators. This fine study of the cockpit area of Leut Emil Meinecke's D.III clearly shows the twin radiators. Emil Meinecke served with Fl.Abt 6 based in the Dardanelles where he achieved six victories**

**Left: This Turkish marked D.III has two wing mounted radiators**







**Albatros D.III** flown by *Offz. Stv. Friedrich Altemeier, Jasta 24*, summer 1917. Aircraft in typical natural plywood fuselage scheme with pilot's personal markings below the cockpit. Radiator is offset



**Albatros D.III D. 751/17** flown by *Ltn. Otto Hunzinger, Jasta Boelcke*, June 1917. The aircraft has a white tail which was *Jasta Boelcke's* marking during this period.

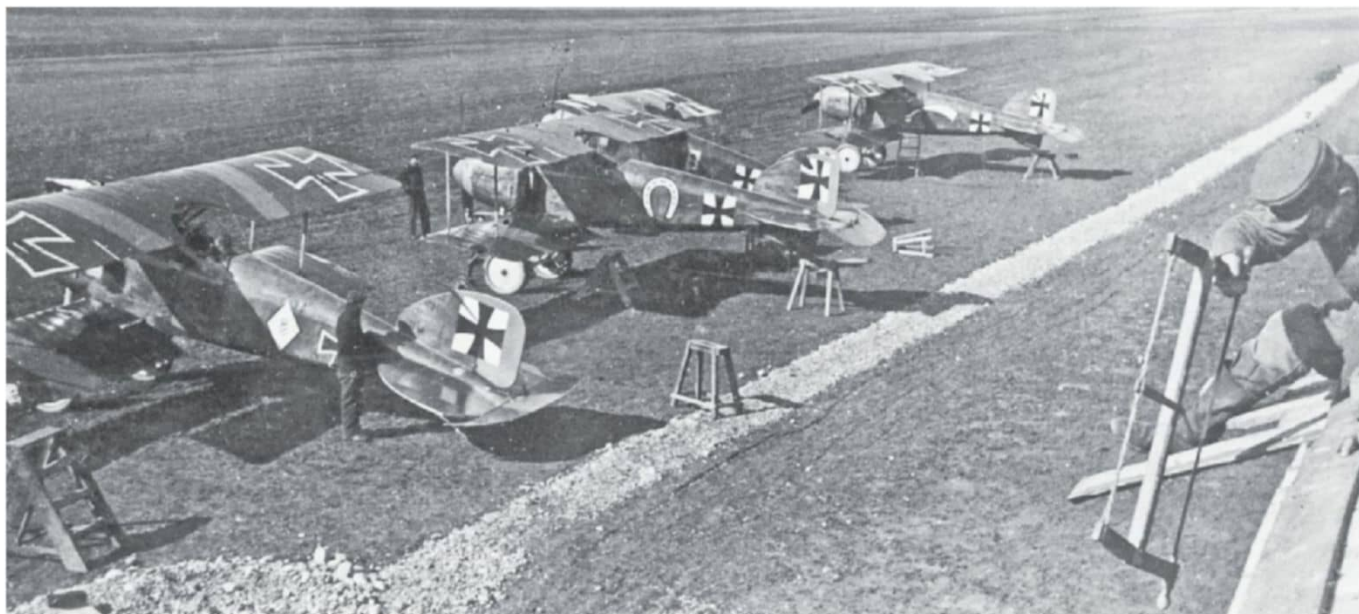


**Albatros D.III D.774/17** flown by *Hptm. Otto Hartmann, Jasta 28w*, summer 1917. Hartmann achieved seven confirmed victories before he became a victim of a 48 squadron Bristol F.2b over the English Channel, north of Dixmude on the 3rd September 1917.



**Albatros D.III D. 796/17** flown by *Ltn. d. R. Georg Noth, Jasta Boelcke*, May 1917. This aircraft was captured by the British after being shot down on 19th May 1917. In British hands the aircraft was designated G39

Drawings by  
Jan Polc



### THE BEGINNING OF A NEW YEAR – WINTER 1917

Poor weather and a lull in ground operations resulted in January being a relatively quiet month in comparison to the autumn of 1916. *Jasta 17* for instance only logged 84.75 hours flying time during the month with only fifteen aerial combats reported. The reduction in aerial activity during the winter of 1917 allowed the German Air Service to establish more *Jagdstaffeln* and re-equip those that were using tired and worn out equipment. D.III's began to arrive more frequently at the front while the number of active D.Is and D.IIs began to tail off so that by February 137 D.III's were listed in the frontline inventory, while in comparison there were only twenty eight D.Is and 150 D.IIs. Despite this, some *Jagdstaffeln* were still being equipped with D.IIs; *Jasta 9* for instance replaced its ailing Fokkers with D.IIs in early 1917 and the newly mobilised *Jasta 23* began life with D.IIs.

Other *Jastas* were equipped with D.III's at the time they became operational. One such unit was *Jasta 18*, which became operational

on 8th January. Fifteen days later on 23rd January Lt n Walter von Bülow-Bothkamp scored the *Jagdstaffel's* first victory when he brought down a Sopwith Strutter over Gheluvelt, killing both the pilot and observer. Walter von Bülow was however forced to land having suffered damage to his fuel tank. Despite this he did get back in to the air later that day when he brought down his second victim, an FE8 pusher from 41 Squadron near Bikschote.

Earlier in the month on 4th January Manfred von Richthofen, who would receive the *Pour le Mérite* a few days later, scored his sixteenth and final victory as part of *Jasta Boelcke*. This time his victim was a Sopwith Pup that broke up and went down near Metz-en-Côture. This was the first time that Richthofen had encountered a Pup, which he felt at the time was superior: 'Only because we were three against one, we detected the enemy's weak points. I managed to get behind him and shot him down.'

While Richthofen was initially impressed with the Pup, the reality was that the type was still underpowered and therefore at a disadvantage against the Albatros. In his book,

**Above: A line up of *Jasta 16b* Albatros D.IIs. The Albatros on the left is Robert Dyck's machine. The third Albatros from the left belonged to Ludwig Hanstein while the D.II furthest from view was Erin Wenig's. The camouflage pattern on Dyck's wings suggests that it is an LVG built Albatros**

*Sopwith Scout A7309*, Sir Gordon Taylor described the problems encountered when flying against an Albatros: 'I could see that fighting the Sopwith Scout against the Albatros Scout was going to be a scientific affair, needing careful thought as well as careful flying and shooting. I had been given clear evidence that my machine could turn inside the Albatros, also that the latter could out climb me easily at 14,000 feet. I knew that its speed was noticeably greater than that of the Sopwith, so that it could also leave me standing in a dive. These factors made surprise attack absolutely essential, going in from above without being seen, using height to overcome the deficiency in level speed, and then trying to lure the heavy Albatros in to a close duel.'

On 15th January Richthofen received orders to take command of *Jasta 11* based at Brayelles, which at the time was performing poorly. Five days later he arrived at *Jagdstaffel 11* with a brand new Albatros D.III and wasted no time in over painting the aircraft red: 'It occurred to me to have my packing case painted all over in staring red. The result was that everyone got to know my red bird. My opponents also seemed to have heard of the colour transformation.'

In his book Richthofen describes a meeting with the captured English crew of his eighteenth victory that occurred on 24th January after he was forced to land following a wing failure: 'I asked them whether they had previously seen my machine in the air, and one of them replied, 'Oh, yes. I know your machine very well. We call it *Le Petit Rouge*.'

While Richthofen's brightly coloured Albatros was not the first example of a personalised aircraft during the Great War, the statement in red would have a profound influence on other elite fighter pilots and was

**Left: This photo of a *Jasta 4* Albatros D.II clearly shows the two colour camouflage pattern. Note that the camouflage demarcation lines appear to have been softened with the use of a brush. This Albatros belonged to Wladek Kralewski who tipped his bird over on its nose in January 1917**





Right: D.III 1997/16, part of the first batch of D.IIIs ordered in October 1916. This aircraft was flown by Lt Reinhold Oertelt of Jasta 19 who became the forty seventh victim of Georges Guynemer on 7th July 1917

Below right: D.III 2219/16 photographed in the summer of 1917. This aircraft was flown by Leut Gerhard Bassenge of Jasta Boelcke. The aircraft behind carries Freidrich Kempf's personal markings

without doubt the genesis of the 'flying circus'. Jasta 11 would soon become fully equipped with D.IIIs, some of which would also be painted red.

January had been a lean month for Jasta Boelcke. In addition to Richthofen's victory on the 4th, Erin Böhme brought down a DH2 west of Beugny on the 7th. Towards the end of the month on 25th January Gustav Kinkel achieved his first victory but in doing so was himself brought down. By now the Jagdstaffeln had received their first D.IIIs but a spate of losses made their former colleague Richthofen speculate that the Jasta had suffered from the same wing failure problems as he had: *'It is possible that the same that happened to me also happened to them.'*

At the end of January the grounding of the D.III following reports of wing failure curtailed operations in the units that had been equipped with the type.

February would see an upturn in the fortunes of Jasta Boelcke, spearheaded by Ltn Werner Voss who had arrived at the Jasta the previous year and had already brought down three aircraft by the end of 1916. Voss picked up where Richthofen had left off, scoring a further eight victories in February to become the units highest scoring serving ace. On 1st February Voss was credited with a DH2 from 29 Squadron over Achiet-le-Petit. Recent arrival Adolf von Tutschek recorded that Voss's adversary, the English captain, had lunch with the pilots of Jasta 2 before moving off to a POW camp.

Voss scored again three days later on the fourth with Böhme downing a further two and Erich König making it four victories for the Staffel that day. Böhme and Voss both increased their tally again on 10th January with their victims, a DH2 and an FE, both going down behind British lines. However the following day Erin Böhme wound up in hospital: *'And I find myself in the military*

Below: A line-up of Jasta 9 aircraft. The D.II with the crossed swords emblem is believed to have been flown by Karl Köhler and Werner Marwitz



*hospital because the day before yesterday a malicious Englishman, who by rights should not be alive, shot me in the left arm. It was a Sopwith two seater that I had overcome to such an extent that it was already on its way down, and so I spared him in an outburst of hunters magnanimity - that's what one gets for one's nobility!'*

The unit would go on to achieve its hundredth victory by the end of the month, almost all of them achieved while flying Albatroses. Voss was instrumental in helping the Staffel to achieve this figure in February with a strong end to the month which included two DH2s downed during the same action on

25th February, and three BEs, one on the 26th and two on the 27th.

At Brayelles the pilots of Jasta 11 under Richthofen's strict tutelage began to flourish with six victories credited to the Staffel in February although some of these may well have been achieved in Halberstadt, following the grounding of the Albatros.

In the French sector, Jasta 17 who at the time were still flying D.IIs and therefore not affected by the grounding recorded 132 flights in February to a total of 121.5 hours. The unit was officially credited with four confirmed victories taking the Staffel tally to seven. Julius Buckler achieving a further two kills on



**Right: An interesting D.III belonging to Vizefeldwebel Ernst Gunther Burggaller of Jasta 10. Note the headrest and wing braces. Burggaller's mechanic, Gefreiter Leinmüller, is sitting in the machine**

14th and 15th of February to take his total to three. Vsfw Jakob Wolff and Ltn Wilhelm Gros achieved the other two victories of the month.

Another *Jagdstaffel* which at the time was based in the French sector was *Jasta 15*, who received their first D.III's before 20th February. Ernst Udet, who was already an accomplished fighter pilot with three confirmed victories to his name, encountered three Nieuport 17s of SPA 81 in his new D.III: *'In a flash we had reached the altitude of the enemy, and thrust ourselves between them and the front. Our attack on the three French single seaters ensued approximately above Mülhausen. However, two of them caught wind of the attack on time and took their leave in near-vertical dives, while the third accepted combat in a plucky fashion. He flew quite well and demonstrated all sorts of tricks like loops, rolls, vertical zooms and other similar manoeuvres.'*

The pilot in the Nieuport was Pierre de Cazenove de Pradines who would himself become a future Ace. Udet continues the story: *'I succeeded in shooting up his engine. His propeller stopped. On the strength of that I approached him, and then the cheeky fellow raised a gloved hand and threatened me. I replied in kind, but that did not appear to make an impression on him, as he made an attempt in spite of that to glide over his lines. He almost succeeded in doing so.'*

Pradines aircraft settled down in no man's land, where he quickly exited the aircraft and made his way back to his own side of the lines.

By February most of the *Jagdstaffeln* created towards the later part of 1916 had become operational. Deliveries of the

**Below: An unknown D.III. The pilot in the centre of this photo is Leut Hermann Frommherz who would end the war with thirty two confirmed victories. The location is believed to be Lübeck, where the Ace served as an instructor from October 1917 to March 1918**



Albatros was by this time so frequent that many of these newly mobilised units began operations equipped with Albatros D.III's, despite the type officially being grounded until mid month. *Jastas 26, 27, 29, 30, 35 and 36* are thought to have been fully or partially equipped with the new aircraft, while many of the older units tended to continue to use older types. *Jasta 5* for instance, did not receive D.II's until February 1917 and it would be much later before they began to receive D.III's.

#### OPERATION ALBERICH

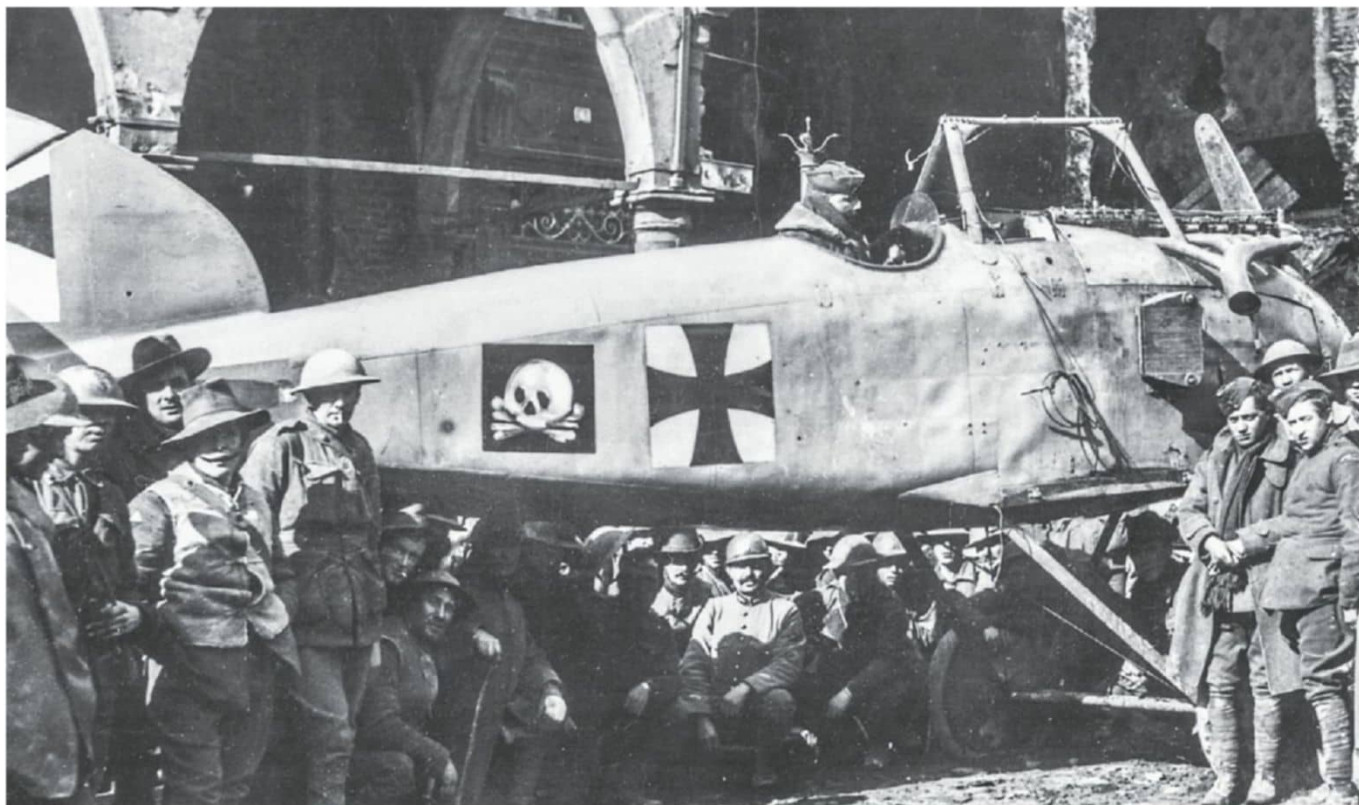
As the German army were preparing for their planned withdrawal to the Hindenburg line, code named *Unternehmen Alberich*, and the Allies began the build up to what would become the Battles of Arras and Aisne, aerial activity naturally increased. Many *Jagdstaffeln* would move to new locations during this period either through necessity brought about by the withdrawal, or in preparation for perceived ground assaults. *Jasta Boelcke* for instance moved from Pronville to Eswars on 14th March and then on to Provville, situated on the outskirts of

Cambrai, seven days later. This did not however stop Werner Voss from almost doubling his total tally of victories to twenty one by the end of the month. Future ace Adolf von Tutschek also scored his first victory during the first week of March in his Albatros D.I when he put a hole in to the gas tank of a DH2, forcing it to land near Beutgnâtre.

During this period Prince Freidrich Karl of Prussia became linked with the unit. After learning to fly he became deputy leader of *Artillerie Flieger-abteilung*. However he was naturally drawn to the fighter unit, which at that time was situated next to his base of operations. He took ownership of a sage green painted D.I thought to be previously used by Dieter Collin. He arranged for a skull motif to be painted on the fuselage and propeller hub, and took every opportunity he could to fly it with the pilots of *Jasta Boelcke*. However the Prince's association with the *Staffel* was short. On 21st March he was flying with others from *Jasta Boelcke* when they encountered a patrol of DH2s. As von Tutschek relates: *'Just when Friedrich Karl was at the point of finalising everything with an Englishman, a second one got behind him and shot up his engine and gas tank so that his only recourse was an*







immediate landing. We couldn't help him and had to watch, shaking with anxiety, as he smoothly landed barely two kilometres from our lines, climbed out, and then while trying to make it back to our lines suddenly collapsed.'

The prince had been wounded in the

abdomen in the exchange. He was captured and treated, but died two weeks later.

Having replaced their Halberstadts with Albatros D.IIs the members of *Jasta 5*, who were at the time based at Gonnelleu in the Cambrai sector, began to make good use of the new machines. On 6th March Lt

**Above:** This well-known photograph shows the captured Albatros D.I 410/16 that was briefly used by Prinz Friedrich Karl of Prussia before he was brought down in no man's land on 21st March 1917. The aircraft was said to be sage green and the skull motif was repeated on the spinner

Heinrich Gontermann began a remarkable run of sixteen victories in seven weeks when he downed an FE2 south of Mory. The *Jasta* moved to Boistrancourt on 11th March as part of the withdrawal where it would be based for twelve months in which time the *Jagdstaffel* would become one of the most celebrated units in the service.

In *Jasta 11* Richthofen increased his tally by a further nine confirmed victories in March taking his grand total to thirty one by the end of the month. His account opened on 4th March when he claimed two victims, a BE2 and a Sopwith Strutter. On 17th March Richthofen and some of his *Staffel* became involved a fight with sixteen British aircraft including Sopwith Strutters and FE2s, a type that the commander of *Jasta 11* treated with the upmost respect: 'During the fight I managed to force a Vickers two seater aside which I then, after 800 shots, brought down. In my machine gun fire the plane lost its opened fuselage.'

Lieuts Kurt Wolff and Carl Allmenröder also were credited with victories during the action. Richthofen also brought down a lone BE2 later that same day to take his tally of victories to twenty eight. On 24th March von

**Above left:** Prinz Friedrich Karl takes off in Albatros D.I 410/16. Note that this photograph appears to have been taken before Prinz Friedrich had a skull motif painted, at least on the spinner. Note also the unusual nose expansion tank

**Left:** Albatros D.II (OAW) 910/16 flown by Max Böhme was captured by the British on 4th March 1917 and allocated the number G14. It was later given to the French and was repainted in a light coloured finish and French national markings. Note that this later style Albatros has a wing mounted Teves and Braun radiator in place of the ear radiators





Right: This LVG built Albatros D.II 1076/16 is shown after being rebuilt and painted white by Zentral Abnahme Kommission, Abteilung ZAK 3 where it was used as a communication aircraft

Below right: Julius Buckler of Jasta 17 prepares for take-off in what is thought to be D.III 2033/16 which would later be marked 'Mops'. Of interest are the Trestles stamped with the serial number of the aircraft that they belong to

Richthofen and his unit encountered a new type of single seater for the first time: 'They were extremely fast and handy. I attacked one of them and ascertained that my machine was the better one. After a long fight I managed to hit the adversary's tank. The propeller stopped running. The plane had to go down. As the fight took place above the trenches, my adversary tried to escape, but I managed to force him to land behind our lines near Givenchy.'

The aircraft in question was a British Spad V.II from 19 Squadron who had been operating the type from the previous month. Despite Richthofen's initial assessment of the Spad, the type would prove to be more than a match for the Albatros and was one of the first of a new generation of more powerful and resilient Allied fighters.

Another *Jasta* that experienced an increase in aerial activity during March was *Jagdstaffel* 18, which at the time was under the command of Oberleutnant Karl Heino Grieffenhagen. The unit was based to the North of the Arras sector but nevertheless saw an increase in action as the German ground troops moved to new positions along the Hindenburg line and the British advanced to new positions in the vacated area.

On 11th March the *Staffel* achieved four confirmed kills on the same day with Paul Strähle and Josef Flink each downing a 1½ Strutter near Zillbeke, while Heinz Josef Kammandel brought down a BE2. Walter von Bülow also claimed credit for a British Balloon north of Armentieres to take his tally to nine confirmed victories: 'It all worked out quite nicely; I saw the occupants jump out by parachute during the first attack. The gas bag didn't want to catch fire, however, even though

Below: A line of Albatroses and Pfalzes belonging to Kest 1b. Kests were home defence units based within German borders. These aircraft were said to be painted blue with a white border



*I carried out several attacks. Finally just as I had shot the last of my special ammunition it burned.'*

Another busy day for the *Jasta* came six days later on 17th March when Paul Strähle brought down a Nieuport 17 that had been part of an escort for FE2s: 'The second Nieuport I attacked lay completely destroyed north of Linselles. My second attack was successful. The pilot, an English sub-lieutenant, was shot in the head. The aircraft exploded while it was still in the air. The engine had to be dug out of the ground.'

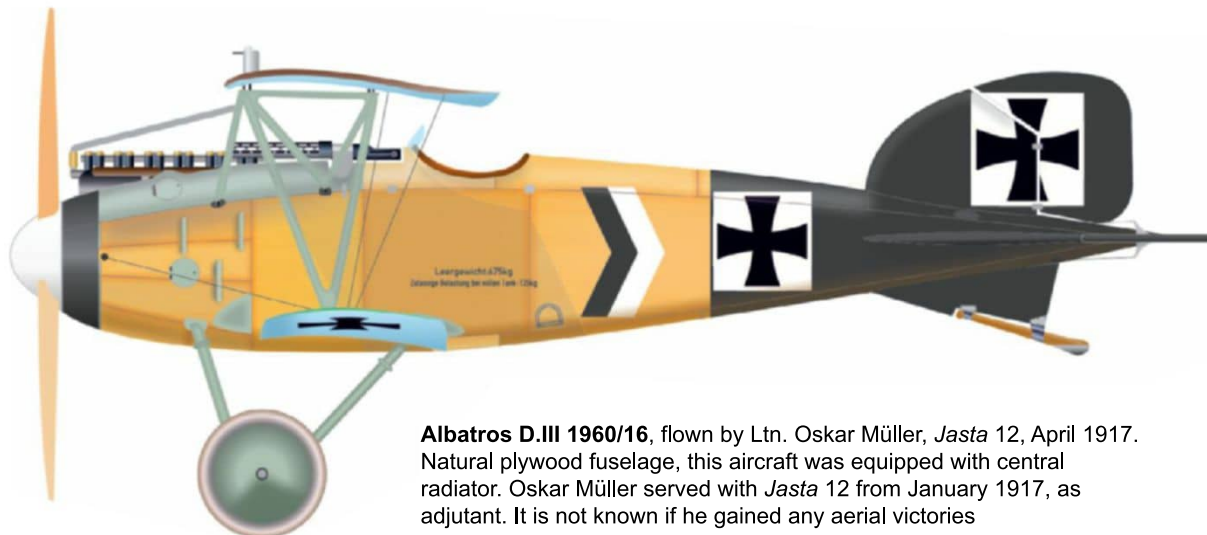
Karl Grieffenhagen, the squadron CO, also brought down a BE2d from 6 Squadron on the same day.

As more D.III's arrived on the frontline, some of the older more established units became re-equipped with the new machine. *Jasta* 12 for instance, who up until March had been mainly using Fokker D.I's showed a dramatic improvement in their monthly figures, achieving ten confirmed kills by the 24th.

March 1917 was in many ways the month that both German and the Allied air services repositioned their pieces and consolidated their position in readiness for what was to come. What came in the following month would be forever remembered by the name Bloody April, a period in aviation history that would be synonymous with the Albatros.



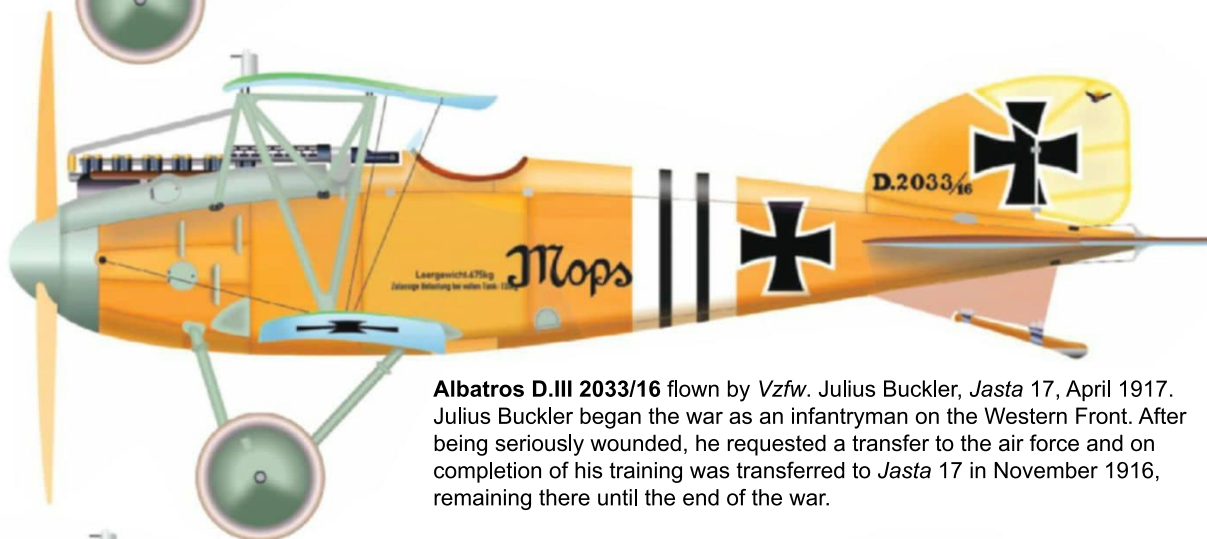




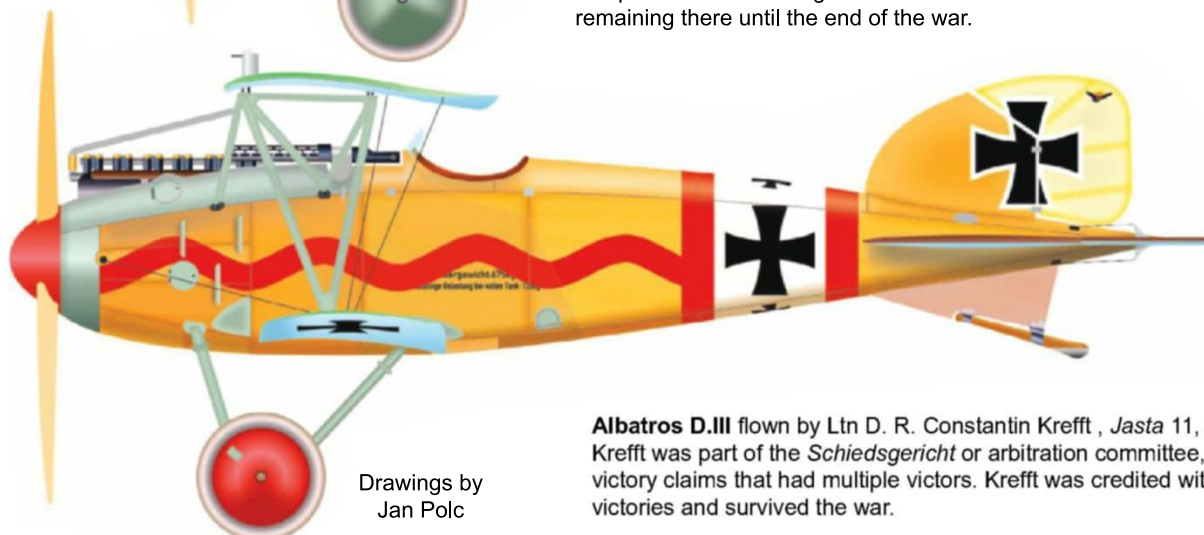
**Albatros D.III 1960/16**, flown by Lt. Oskar Müller, *Jasta* 12, April 1917. Natural plywood fuselage, this aircraft was equipped with central radiator. Oskar Müller served with *Jasta* 12 from January 1917, as adjutant. It is not known if he gained any aerial victories



**Albatros D.III 767/17** This aircraft was flown by Lt. Oskar Sietz of *Jasta* 30. Vertical tail surfaces are decorated in the style of the Bavarian flag

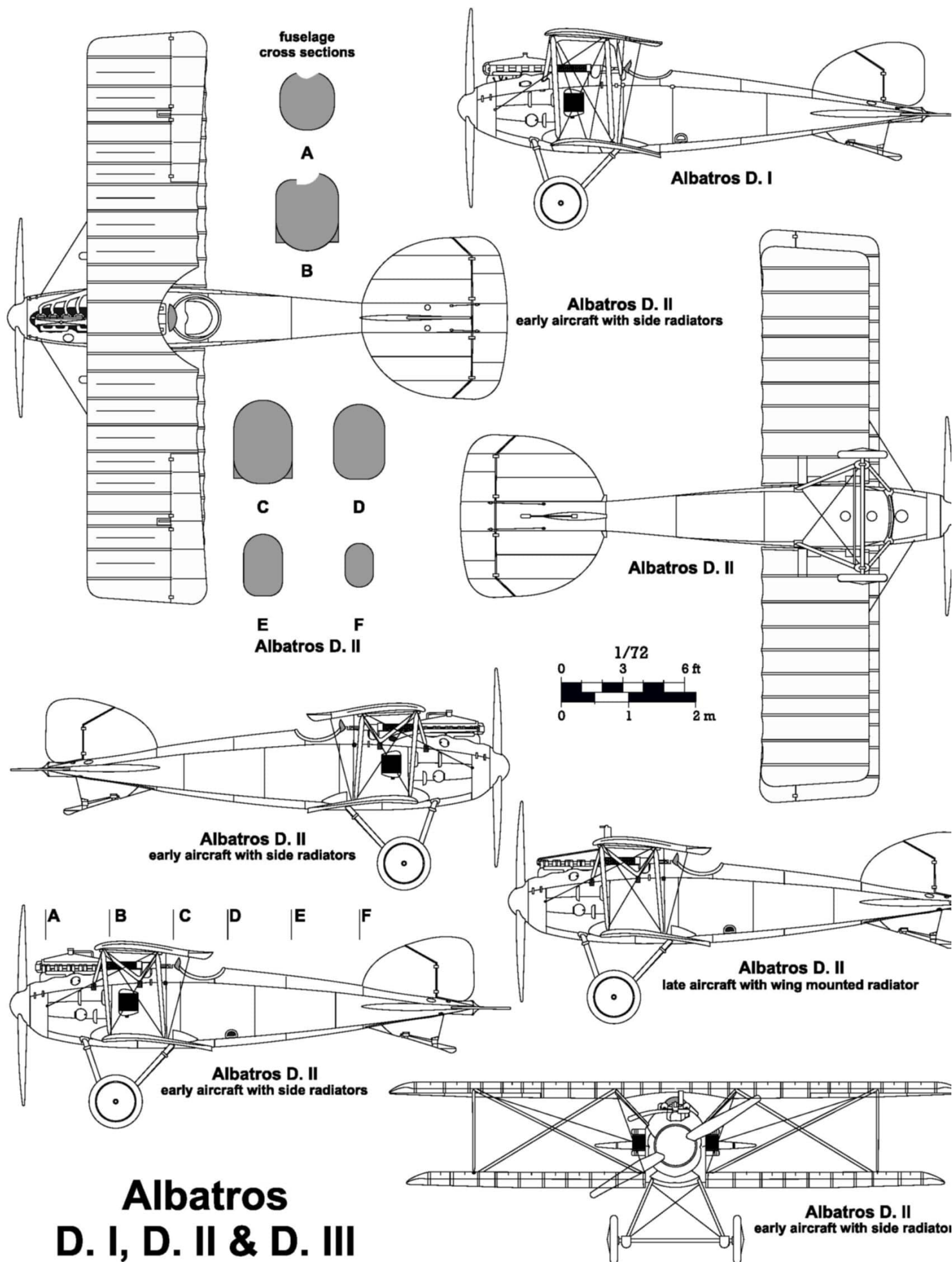


**Albatros D.III 2033/16** flown by Vzfw. Julius Buckler, *Jasta* 17, April 1917. Julius Buckler began the war as an infantryman on the Western Front. After being seriously wounded, he requested a transfer to the air force and on completion of his training was transferred to *Jasta* 17 in November 1916, remaining there until the end of the war.

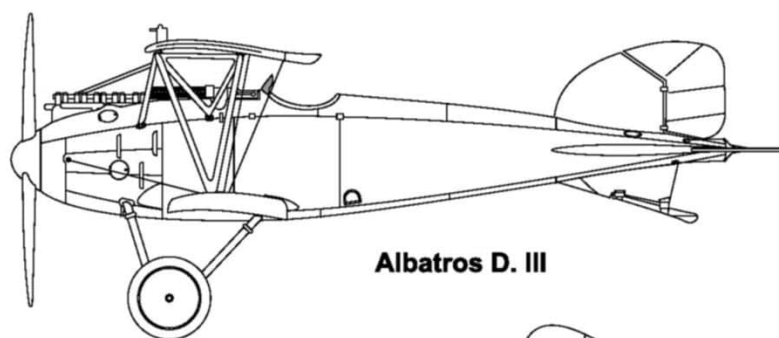


Drawings by  
Jan Polc

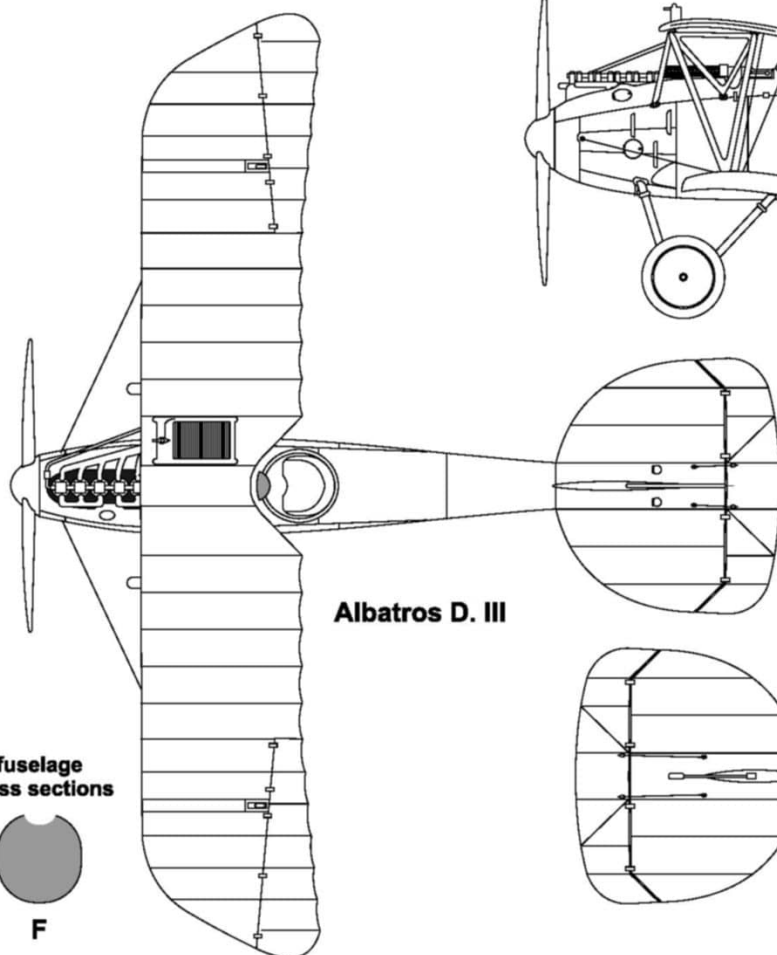
**Albatros D.III** flown by Lt. D. R. Constantin Krefft, *Jasta* 11, April 1917. Krefft was part of the *Schiedsgericht* or arbitration committee, who settled victory claims that had multiple victors. Krefft was credited with three victories and survived the war.



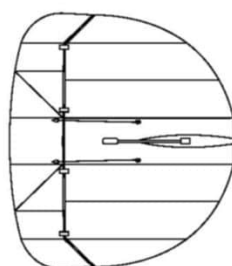
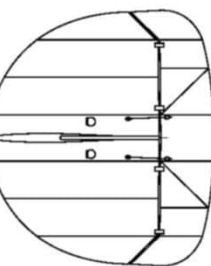




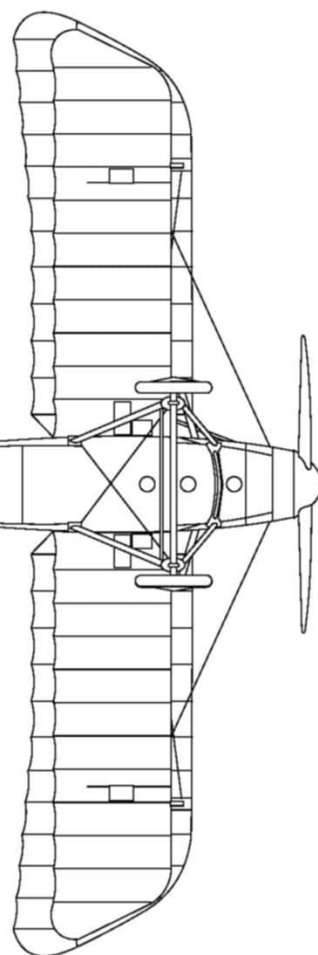
**Albatros D. III**



**Albatros D. III**



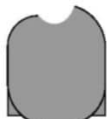
**Albatros D. III**



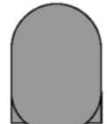
fuselage  
cross sections



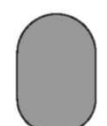
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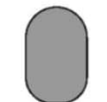
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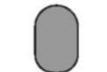
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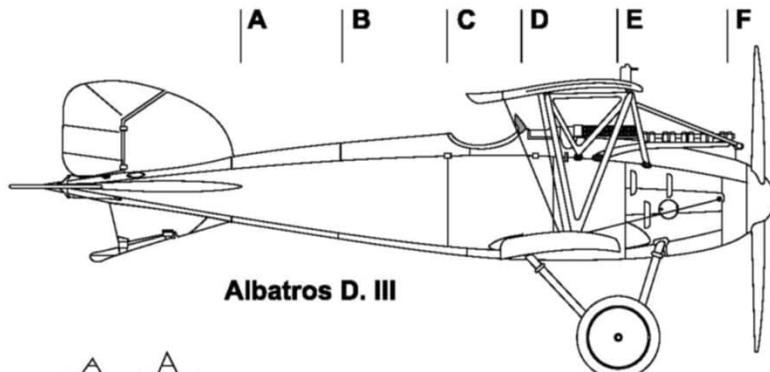


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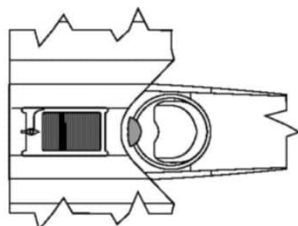


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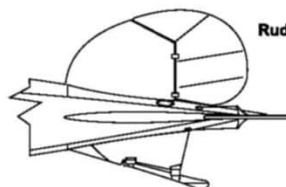
**Albatros D. III**



**Albatros D. III**

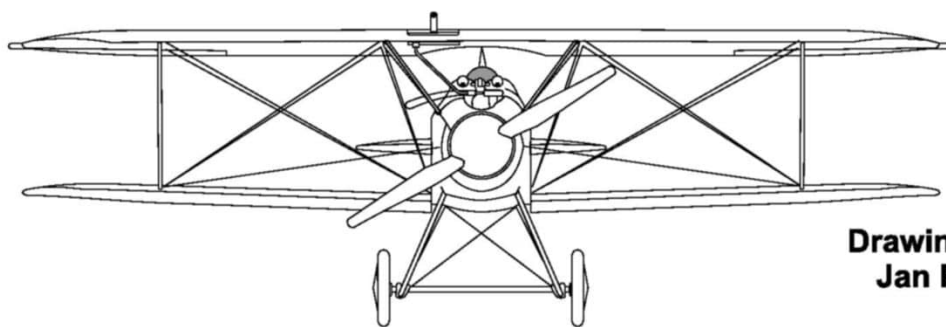


centrally mounted radiator - early D. III



Rudder shape on OAW built aircraft

**Albatros D. III**



**Drawings by  
Jan Polc**



**Albatros D.III 2063/16** flown by Lt. d. R. Hugo Geiger, *Jasta* 34b, July 1917. This aircraft was probably flown by Vzfw. Willi Kempe when he was shot down on July 22nd 1917.



**Albatros D.III 2061/16** flown by Leutnant Hans Fritzsche of *Jasta* 29. Note that the number '4' is repeated on the underside of the fuselage



**Albatros D.III, 2219/16** July 1917. This aircraft was flown by Leut. Gerhard Bassenge of *Jasta* Boelcke. Gerhard Bassenge would later become a General in the *Luftwaffe*.



**Albatros D.III 1922/16**, *Jasta* 24, December 1916. The Pilot of this aircraft is not known.

Drawings by  
Jan Polc



## BLOODY APRIL

At just before 5.30am on 9th April (Easter Monday), a bombardment of the German lines along the Arras sector, which had been building since the end of March, fell silent. Whistles blew and British infantry began to advance across a snow covered no man's land with the ultimate aim of punching a hole in the German front. Just like the Somme offensive nine months earlier Trenchard's strategy for his aircraft was an offensive one with the aim of keeping the Germans away from the air space above the battlefield. While the British had fielded superior numbers of aircraft to achieve this, the German fighters now had a technical advantage over most of its adversaries and were better organised than they had been in the previous year. Air battles above the Arras and the French assault on the Aisne a week later would become some of the most bitter and intense of the war to date. Somewhere in the region of 245 British aircraft were destroyed as a direct result of air action during Bloody April with over 300 British aviators listed as either

**Below: A well-known line-up photograph featuring Albatroses from Jasta 11 said to have been taken in April 1917. The aircraft closest to the camera was flown by Ltn d.R. Constantin Krefft while the D.III behind it is von Richthofen's Le Petit Rouge**

being killed or missing in action. Ernst Jünger, a German infantryman who later became known for his memoir *Storm of Steel*, gave some indication of what the air war in April looked like from the perspective of a soldier on the ground when he wrote: *'During these days, there was a whole series of dogfights, which almost invariably ended in defeat for the British since it was Richthofen's squadron they were up against. Often five or six planes in succession would be chased away or shot down in flames.'*

*Jagstaffeln* 3, 4, 11, 12, 27, 28, 30 and 33 were all attached to 6 *Armee*, which would be in direct confrontation with the British on the Arras front while *Jagstaffeln* attached to 3 and 7 *Armees* would take the brunt of the French assault. High scoring units *Jastas* Boelcke and 5, who were both attached to 2 *Armee*, were positioned south of the main Arras battlefield.

The first day of April gave no major indication of what was to come with the only claims filed being made by Werner Voss and Fritz Otto Bernert of *Jasta* Boelcke, which by now was almost completely equipped with D.III's. Otto Bernert would feature highly in the *Staffel's* monthly claim figures and would eventually be credited with fifteen victories before being transferred to take command of *Jasta* 6 at the end of the month.

*Jasta* 11 would become one of the most successful units of the period and its commander, Manfred von Richthofen, would seal his reputation as one of Germany's greatest fighter pilots by adding another twenty one confirmed claims to his tally, most of which were likely to have been achieved in his *Le Petit Rouge* Albatros D.III. His first two victories of the month came on 2nd April when, despite wind, rain and low clouds, he forced down a BE2d over Farbus: *'Suddenly one of the impertinent fellows tried to drop down upon me. I allowed him to come near and then we started a merry quadrille. Sometimes my opponent flew on his back and sometimes he did other tricks. He had a double seated chaser. I was his master and very soon I recognized that he could not escape me.'*

*During an interval in the fighting I convinced myself that we were alone. It followed that the victory would accrue to him who was calmest, who shot best and who had the clearest brain in a moment of danger. After a short time I got him beneath me without seriously hurting him with my gun. We were at least two kilometres from the front. I thought he intended to land but there I had made a mistake. Suddenly, when he was only a few yards above the ground, he once more went off on a straight course. He tried to*



Right: D.III 2096/16, Vera, was brought down by Armand Pinsard of Spa.78 between Nauroy and Moronvilliers on 21st April 1917. Its pilot, Leut Wilhelm Wichard of Jasta 24, was taken prisoner. Vera is seen here after French markings have been applied over the German national insignia. D2096/16 was eventually sent to the US for evaluation and it is probably in America that this photograph was taken



*escape me. That was too bad. I attacked him again and I went so low that I feared I should touch the roofs of the houses of the village beneath me. The Englishman defended himself up to the last moment. At the very end I felt that my engine had been hit. Still I did not let go. He had to fall. He rushed at full speed right into a block of houses.*

*There was little left to be done. This was once more a case of splendid daring. He defended himself to the last. However, in my opinion he showed more foolhardiness than courage. This was one of the cases where one must differentiate between energy and idiocy. He had to come down in any case but he paid for his stupidity with his life.'*

Later that day Richthofen forced down a Sopwith 1½ Strutter East of Vimy; victory number thirty three. Richthofen was not the only pilot of Jasta 11 to have successes on the 2nd April. Allmenröder, Festner, Krefft and Nathanael all scored victories on this date in their Albatroses.

One of the most famous incidents to occur during this period happened on 5th April when a flight of six newly arrived Bristol F 2A two seat fighters led by VC winner Capt William Leefe Robinson encountered a group of Jasta 11 Albatroses, south east of Douai. The Bristol fighters, employing defensive tactics more suited to the sluggish BE2s, were completely overwhelmed by the fighters led by von Richthofen who later described the attack as a 'cavalry charge'. Of the six F 2A that crossed the lines only two limped home.

Richthofen claimed two of the downed Bristols, while Sebastian Festner drove down Robinson's aircraft. Georg Simon was credited with the other Bristol. The Bristol Fighters situation had been made progressively worse because their machine guns had not been lubricated on Robinson's orders, and so many of the guns ceased up. Two claims were made on the British side but according to Richthofen, 'Not a single one of us was even wounded'.

By this time many of Richthofen's colleagues in Jasta 11 had followed their *Staffelführer's* lead and painted their Albatroses red. Richthofen was also not the only member of Jagdstaffel 11 to feature regularly on the *Staffel's* victory claims list during Bloody April. Karl Emil Schäfer, Kurt Wolff and Sebastian Festner all dramatically increased their scores during this period. Kurt Wolff outdid his *Staffelführer* to become the month's highest scorer with twenty two victories including four on 13th April and a further two on the following day. Karl Schäfer would end the month with a total of twenty three confirmed victories, fifteen of which were achieved in April. Festner would achieve ten victories throughout April before himself becoming victim to the rear gunner of a Sopwith Strutter near Oppy.

During March, Manfred von Richthofen's brother Lothar had arrived at his sibling's Jagdstaffel and began to feature on the *Staffel* claim list. He achieved sixteen victories by the end of the month. All but one of these were scored in April, six of which were achieved in succession on the 11th, 13th and 14th.

Despite losing their leader, Hans Berr, early in the month as a result of a collision with Paul Hoppe's aircraft, Jagdstaffel 5 had an exceptional period during Bloody April. The Jasta, now operating mainly D.IIIs achieved a total of thirty two confirmed claims, second only to Jasta 11's figures for the month. Now under the command of Heinrich Gontermann, Jasta 5 had a particularly busy day on 13th April. In the morning a patrol of Jasta 5 Albatroses led by Gontermann fell on to a group of four British FE2bs of 57 Squadron. Within a short space

Above left: D.III 2061/16 was flown by Leut Hans Fritzche of Jasta 29. The aircraft is shown in this photograph after crash landing. Note that the 4 is repeated on the underside of the fuselage

Left: This D.III was the personal mount of Leut d.R.Franz Dotzel of Jasta 19 photographed in spring 1917





**Right: A D.III of Jasta 28 photographed at Wasquehal where the unit was station between March and August 1917**

of time two of the British pushers were downed. One was taken by the leader while the other was downed by Kurt Schneider. Later that day Gontermann and Edmund Nathanael claimed a Balloon each. Gontermann wrote: *'In the evening, I took off around 6.00 and shot down a French captive balloon at 7.40 using a self designed cartridge. It burned during the first attack. No enemy aircraft were there at the time. With two hits from machine-gun fire from the ground, I returned home happily.'*

Kurt Schneider had a particularly fruitful day on 23rd April when he claimed three victories, two of which, a FE2b and a DH2, collided with each other during Schneider's attack. On the same day Gontermann downed an RE8 from 34 Squadron south east of Arras. Schnieder and Gontermann were the *Jasta's* most successful pilots of the month with Gontermann scoring eleven victories and Schneider scoring ten. Just below Gontermann and Schneider in the rankings Edmund Nathanael was accredited with nine claims during April.

Another successful fighter unit during the Bloody April period was *Jagdstaffel 4*, mainly as a result of the efforts of Hans Klein and Wilhelm Frankl who between them achieved all but three of the *Jasta's* seventeen claims that month. Four of Frankl's six victories occurred on 4th April. Frankl downed a FE2b night bomber at around 2.30 in the morning, wounding its pilot. Later that same morning a further two Fees were shot down in quick succession, East of Arras. An hour later at around 10am Frankl brought a BE2e down north east of Boiry to make it four. Tragically Wilhelm Frankl was killed three days later when the patrol he was flying which encountered a group of Bristol F 2as of 48 Squadron flying an offensive patrol between Arras, Lens and Vitry. During the engagement Frankl's Albatros was seen to break up in mid



air: *'We saw the usual dog-fight which regularly happened in the afternoon and saw an English aeroplane fall out of the sky, and*

*then another one which somersaulted over and over before hitting the ground about a kilometre away. Unfortunately it was one of ours, with the well-known Leutnant Frankl, with his Pour le Mérite and Iron Cross 1st and 2nd class on his chest, lying still in front of us.'*

It has been speculated that Frankl, who the previous day had claimed his nineteenth confirmed victory, was the victim of the wing failure issue that continued to plague the Albatros.

**Left: This elegantly painted D.III belonged to a Marine feld Jasta. As the name suggests these Jagdstaffeln were Naval units**

**Below: The Albatros served in all theatres of war including the Middle East. This photograph shows a pair of FI.Abt 300 D.IIIs in Palestine. Note the unusual style of radiators, fitted in the field to aid the cooling of the engine in the hot dry desert conditions**







Above: The impressive sight of *Jasta 30* lined up at Phalempin in the Summer of 1917. The aircraft closest to the camera belongs to Oblt Hans Bethge. Behind this is the D.III of Hans Oberlander and then D.767/17 flown by Oscar Seitz



Left: This D.III, thought to have been overpainted in black, was the personal aircraft of Leut Joachim von Bertrab of *Jasta 30*. Note the centrally mounted radiator. Bertrab was shot down by Mick Mannock on 12th August 1917 after a five minute dogfight during which he was wounded in both arms and his left leg

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The spring and early summer of 1917 would prove to be the golden era of the Albatros. By the end of April around 454 Albatros scouts were listed on the frontline inventory, accounting for approximately two thirds of all D-type aircraft listed at this time.

The numbers of Albatros fighters in frontline service would continue to increase throughout the next year or so. However the next generation of Allied aircraft, such as the Camel and SE5a that arrived during the spring and summer of 1917, would prove to be more than a match for the Albatros and the balance of air superiority above the Western Front would again begin to swing. The next generation of the Albatros that began to arrive at the front in May was the D.V, which would ultimately prove to be a disappointment to the German pilots who had enjoyed such success



Left: This striking crowned eagle motif was the personal insignia Leut Wilhelm Papenmayer of *Jasta 2*. The rectangular fitting on the nose suggests that this was an OAW built aircraft

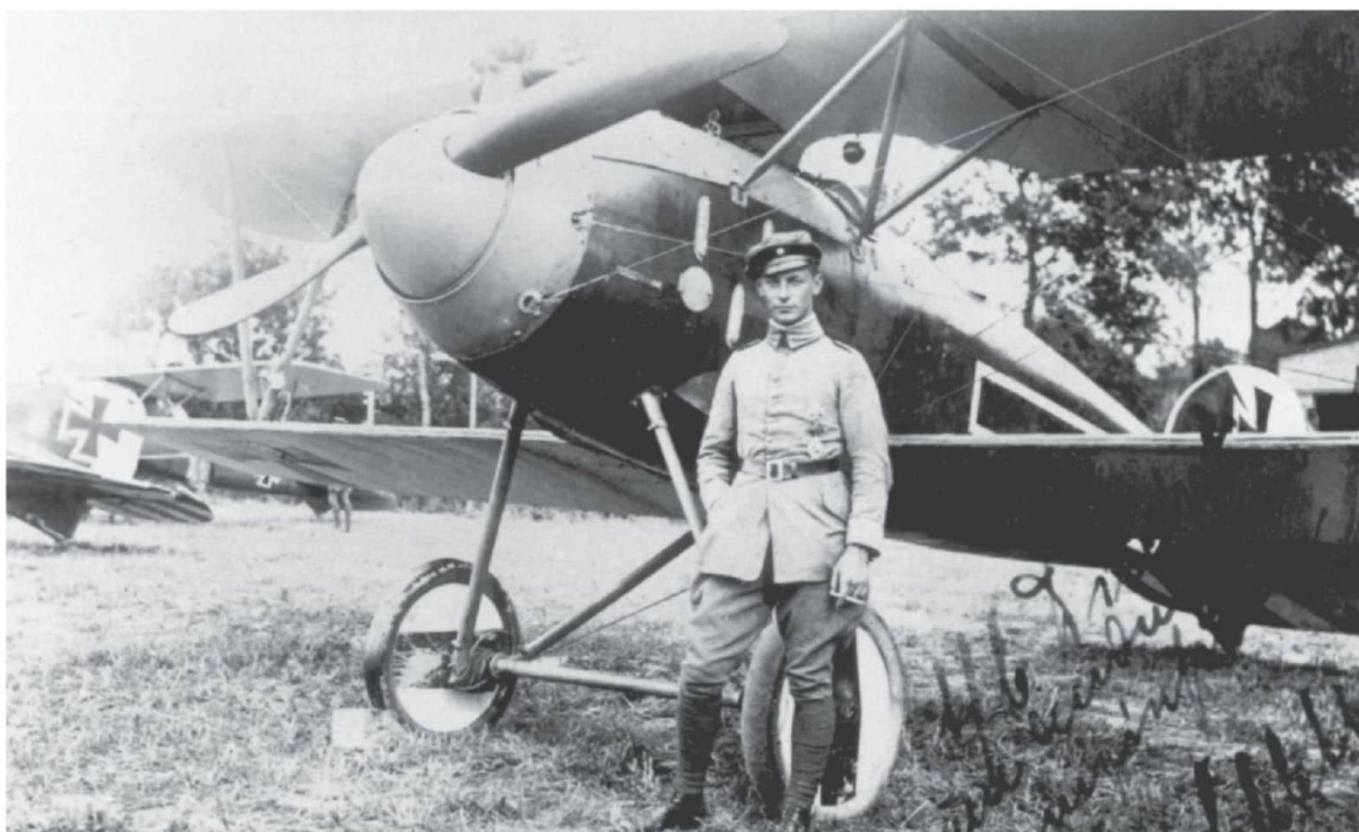
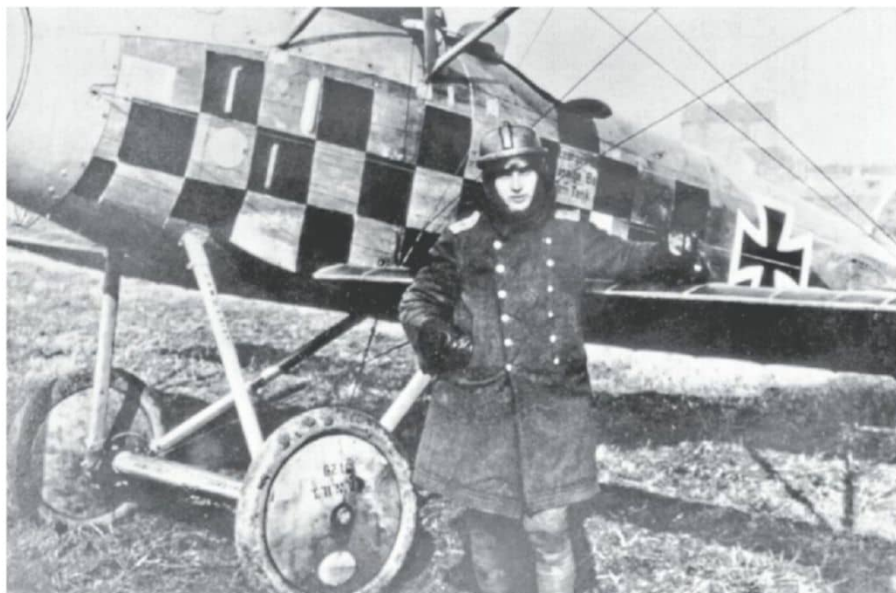


**Right:** This OAW built D.III, D5127/17, was the aircraft of Hermann Habich of *Jasta 49* who survived the war with seven confirmed victories

with the D.III. Many considered the development of the D.V to be a step backwards. Worse still the D.V was even more susceptible to wing failures than its predecessor. The German *Idflieg*, who by allowing the Albatros to become the dominant producer of D-type fighters during 1917, was now stuck with an aircraft that was losing ground technically to the enemy machines. A solution to this problem would eventually take shape in the form of the fighter competitions of 1918, which ultimately resulted in the

**Below:** A late war OAW built Albatros with a devil's head emblem. The devil's head could be black or red in colour but a close up photograph of the artwork shows that the horns and tongue are painted in a different colour to the head. This aircraft belonged to *Vsflw. Boldt* of *Jasta 31*

**Bottom:** Another late war OAW D.III. This aircraft was flown by *Leut Heinrich Schleth* of *Jasta 37*



**Right:** This camouflaged D.III is thought to have been flown by Leut Rudolf Hohberg of Fl.Abt. A 263. This aircraft was used for observational duties. The almost black nature of the darker areas suggests the presence of red so perhaps this colour was a reddish brown

development of the Fokker D.VII. Albatros would however continue play a major part in D-type productions by building the Fokker under license at both Johannisthal and Schneidmühl (OAW).

The D.III continued to be produced throughout 1917 with numbers at the frontline peaking at 446 in October 1917, by which time the D.V was the most numerous fighter with numbers totalling 526.

In total around 1,677 D.I to D.III aircraft were built by Albatros Werke, OAW and LVG between July 1916 and the end of the war.

**Below:** This ornate dragon artwork adorns a late war OAW built D.III assigned to Kest 5







**Above: Albatros D.II (OEF) 53.03, Lilli, one of sixteen D.IIs built in early 1917 most of which served on the Eastern Front**



**Left: A pristine D.II (OEF) 53.06 photographed at the Oeffag factory airfield. This aircraft is known to have served with Flik 37/D in the autumn of 1917**

### THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ALBATROS

When war was declared in 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Air Force was woefully ill-equipped and the industry that supported it incapable of producing sufficient aircraft. As a result the War Ministry was forced to allow the establishment of German subsidiary manufacturers in Austro-Hungary. Albatros, DFW and Aviatik all set up manufacturing and development facilities. DFW would eventually be renamed Phönix. In addition a Viennese financier called Camillo Castiglioni bought the German Brandenburg company.

On the 23rd May 1915 Italy declared war on Austro-Hungary and this event created an increasing demand on the industry. The Italian front was fought over difficult mountainous terrain, which initially would prove to be a natural deterrent against an Italian Air Force that consisted largely of obsolete French aircraft but by the spring of 1916 the Italians were beginning to use types better suited to penetrating the local terrain. These aircraft included modern French Nieuports and a three engined Caproni bomber, which would eventually be used in daytime raids across the Dolomites.

Until the later war years the Austro-Hungarian *Luftfahrtruppen* (LFT) relied



**Left: Albatros D.II (OEF) 53.14 in the field. Note the milled pattern of the natural metal cowlings. The four vents visible on the nose panel appear to be unique to 53.14. It's not known if the pattern is repeated on the starboard side**

**Right: A beautiful side profile study of one of the early production prototype 53 series D.III (OEF). 53.21 is photographed at the Oeffag airfield with a winter cowling installed**

heavily on aircraft bought directly from Germany or aircraft developed and produced by Germany subsidiary manufacturers for their single seat fighter force. The most commonly used fighter during the 1916 period was the Hansa Brandenburg D.I, known as the Star-strutter because of its unusual star shaped strut arrangement. The Star-strutter was not particularly liked by those that flew it. It was difficult to handle and tricky to land, which earned it the nickname The Killer.

The *Oesterreichische Flugzeugfabrik A.G* (Oeffag) was formed in March 1915 after the *Oesterreichische Daimler Motoren AG*, which was part of the Skodawerke empire, was given permission to build an aircraft factory on the Steinfeld, a huge natural flat aerodrome. Initially the company designed and built two seat reconnaissance aircraft and flying boats but in late 1916 Oeffag obtained the right to build the Albatros Scout under license. Unlike the German Albatros, Oeffag's machine would feature a more powerful 185hp engine. The designers at Oeffag also made slight changes to the fuselage and slightly increased the wing chord. A contract with the LFT for fifty series 53 machines was signed on 4th December 1916 and the first production prototype, a D.II, was initially flown in January 1917. A month later a D.III was flight tested for the first time and while trials were delayed because of subzero weather production acceptances were begun in May. By this time, news of the sesquiplane wing failures in France had reached the

**Right: An astounding in-flight photograph of Albatros D.III (OEF) 53.38 flown by Josef Friedrich of Flik 24 illustrating the inhospitable landscape over which these aircraft performed. Freidrich attained the status of being an Ace with a total of seven victories credited to him by the end of the war. Note the aircraft sports Flik 24 squadron markings of a black nose, wheel covers and struts**

**Below: A line-up of six OEF D.IIIs possibly photographed at Pergine airfield**







**Above: Some late 53 series and early 153 series production Albatroses had upper surfaces painted with an intricate pattern of ochre swirls on a green base as can be seen clearly on this photograph of 153.04 nose down**

engineers at *Oeffag* and work was carried out to strengthen the lower wing.

Sixteen production series 53 D.IIs (53.01-53.16) were produced, most of which served on the Eastern Front after acceptance. The remainder of the series 53 contract consisted of D.IIs (53.20-53.53). A further seventy two aircraft were ordered by the LFT on 3rd February 1917 of which only eleven 53 series D.IIs were completed before production of the more powerful 153 series took over.

The remaining sixty one aircraft from the contract made in February were fitted with a high compression 200hp engine and

designated 153.01 to 153.61. Other than the change in power plant, the 153 series aircraft were initially identical to their predecessor. Another fifty aircraft were ordered in July 1917 (153.62- 513.111) and a further one hundred in October (153.112-153.211). By this time the fuselage had been modified so that the nose was reshaped to eliminate the use of a spinner. A total of 281 series 153 Albatroses were produced between July 1917 and June 1918 with a final contract being placed in May 1918 when an order for 300 machines was made. Seventy of these would become 153 series aircraft (153.212-153.281),

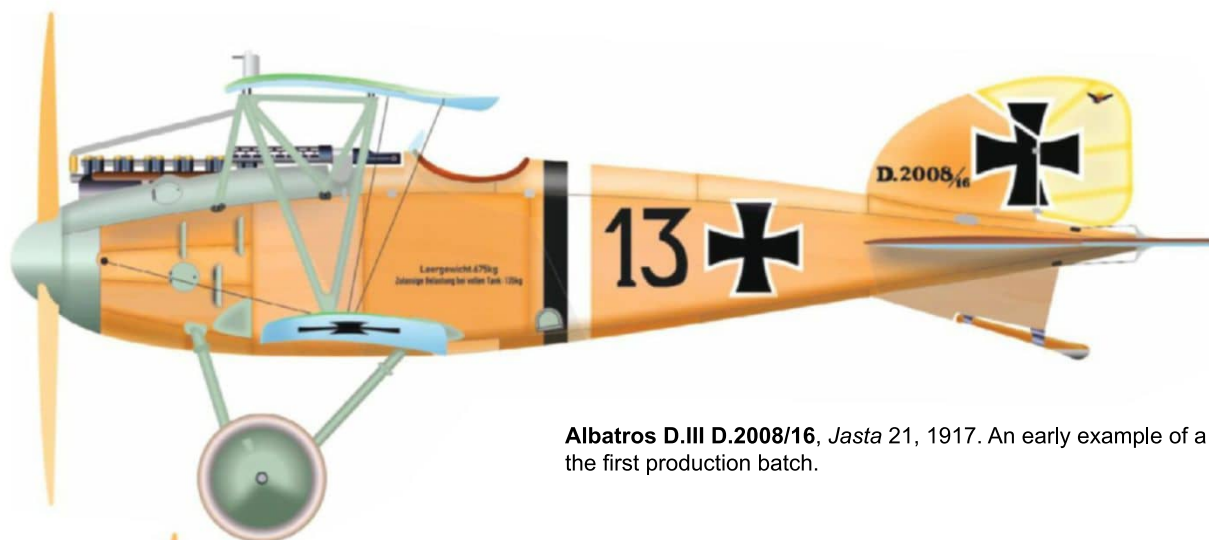
the remaining 230 aircraft would feature an updated 225hp Daimler engine and be identified as 253 series aircraft.

The 253 series began to be used operationally in May 1918. The new version of the aircraft was virtually identical to earlier versions, but minor internal modifications were required to support the more powerful engine. A further order of 100 aircraft was made in August although not all of these were produced by the end of the war. According to Peter Grosz a total of 260 series 253 Albatroses were produced, thirty of which were completed after the end of hostilities.

The Oeffag built Albatroses were armed with two Schwarzlose machine guns fitted within the fuselage, with long barrels that sat under the Daimler engine exhaust and intake manifolds. This system was not liked and a few 153 series Albatroses were fitted with experimental mountings where the guns fitted into the fuselage coaming and the long gun barrels sat above the exhaust and intake manifold. This configuration was also applied to some 253 series aircraft although earlier Albatroses from this series retained the buried machine gun configuration.

**Left: Albatros D.III (OEF) 153.112 was the first OEF production Albatros to have a rounded nose. The aircraft also has an interesting experimental hexagon camouflage pattern which would have been hand painted**





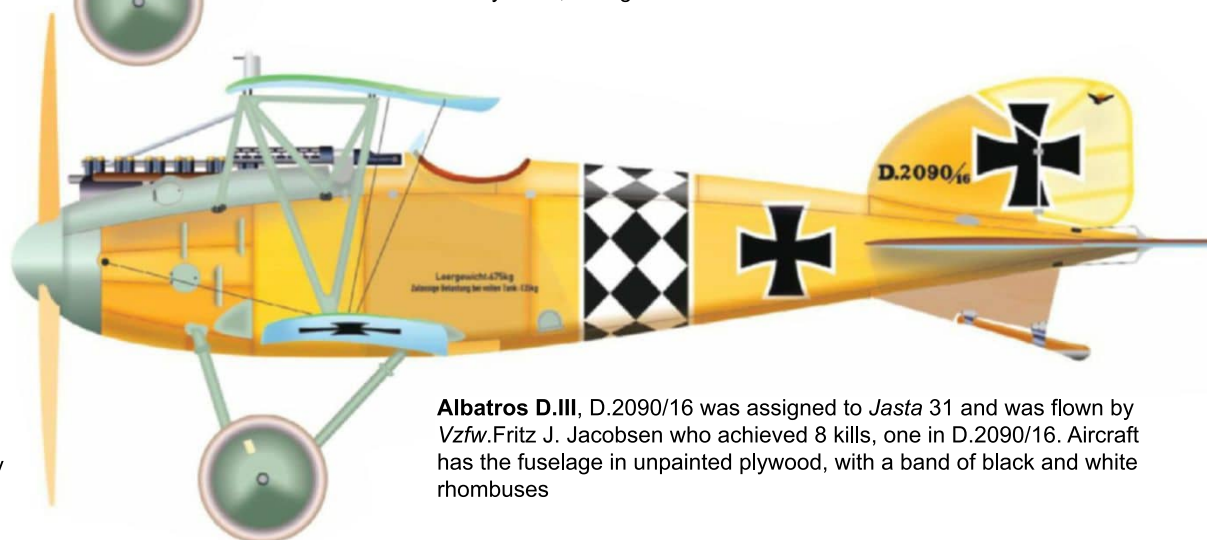
**Albatros D.III D.2008/16**, *Jasta 21*, 1917. An early example of a D.III from the first production batch.



**Albatros D.III** flown by Lt. Franz Pernet, *Jasta Boelcke*, July 1917. Franz Pernet, who was killed in action on September 5th 1917 was the Stepson of General Ludendorf.



**Albatros D.III**, flown by Lt. d. R. Werner Voss. It is believed that the intricate decorations were painted while Voss was stationed with *Jasta Boelcke* prior to taking leave in mid-April 1917. Voss transferred to *Jasta 5* in May 1917, taking his D.III with him.



**Albatros D.III**, D.2090/16 was assigned to *Jasta 31* and was flown by Vzfw. Fritz J. Jacobsen who achieved 8 kills, one in D.2090/16. Aircraft has the fuselage in unpainted plywood, with a band of black and white rhombuses

Drawings by  
Jan Polc





### (OEF) ALBATROS IN COMBAT

When the 53 series arrived at the front in June 1917 the type was well received by the pilots that flew them and seen as a huge improvement over the dangerous Brandenburg fighters.

One of the most famous fighter units at the time was Flik 41J, which in February 1917 became the first unit in the Austro-Hungarian Air Service to become a stand-alone fighter unit. The unit's commander was Godwin Brumowski who would become one of the most famous Austro-Hungarian fighter pilots of World War I. Before taking command of the newly formed Flik, Brumowski spent time in the German *Jasta* 24 gaining experience with the unit. Flik 41J began receiving their first Albatros (OEF) D.III's in the middle of August. Brumowski, who was already in the middle of a phenomenal run of eighteen victories in nineteen days, scored his first victory in the new Albatros fighter on 19th August 1917 when he brought down a Caudron two seater near Karbinje-Ivangrad. A day later on the 20th he brought down another Caudron.

Inspired by Richthofen, whom he had met during his time in Germany, Brumowski painted his Albatroses red, and is first recorded as using the brightly coloured machine in October 1916 when he attacked an enemy observation balloon near the Isola Morosina. By the end of 1917 Godwin Brumowski had attained a total of twenty nine victories, ten of which were achieved in an Albatros.

In February 1918 aerial activities increased after the quieter winter months. Brumowski had two brushes with death within a few days of each other. The first incident occurred on 1st February when Brumowski took on seven or eight aircraft in his Albatros D.III (Oef). During the ensuing dogfight the Brumowski's fuselage was struck by twenty six bullets and the fuel tank on the wing had also been damaged. The leaking fuel ignited the upper and lower wing forcing Brumowski to douse the flames as best he could and he considered himself lucky to reach his airfield without injury. A few days later on 4th February, Brumowski again became involved in a fight with eight English aircraft. Flying an aircraft full of holes and

**Above: Two Aces of Flik41J, Godwin Brumowski and Frank Link-Crawford, with their respective OEF Albatroses 153.52 and 153.16 at Torresella airfield in December 1917**

with loose fabric tearing away from one of his lower wings he managed to break away from the combat and return to his airfield whereby his aircraft flipped on landing.

Godwin Brumowski survived the war achieving a total of thirty five victories of which sixteen were attained while flying the Albatros.

The name Frank Linke-Crawford was also strongly linked to Flik 41J. Linke-Crawford was transferred to the unit in early August 1917 and his first victory in an Albatros occurred on the evening of 23rd September when he shot down a seaplane over Grado. He would achieve thirteen victories while serving in Flik 41J including two doubles. All but the first four of these victories were attained while flying an Albatros. During his time in Flik 41K Frank Linke-Crawford wore a red helmet, which earned him the nickname 'the red head'. In December 1917 he was given command of the newly formed Flik60J where he flew Phönix and Aviatik fighters.

Another unit to achieve a certain level of fame was Flik 55J, which became known as the *Kaiser-Staffel* (Emperors Squadron). The *Kaiser-Staffel* would be one of the first fighter squadrons to become formed entirely of the newly delivered OEF Albatros. Flik 55J would be linked to names such as Josef von Maier, Julius Arigli and Josef Kiss who often flew as a unit formation together. Josef von Maier was appointed commanding officer of the newly formed fighter squadron in July and remained as CO until September 1918. All of von Maier's seven confirmed victories were achieved in Albatroses, including two doubles. The first of these happened on 15th November when von Maier, Arigli and Kiss attacked a trio of Caproni bombers over Monte Summano. Two days later, again grouped with



**Left: A close-up of Frank Link-Crawford's insignia on the fuselage of 153.16 shows the intricacies of the artwork that is not apparent from the more distant shot. The man himself stands in the foreground**



**Above:** A well-known photograph of Godwin Bromowski's last Albatros at Portbuffole in June 1918. D.III (OEF) 153.209 was over painted red with Bromowski's customary death's head shroud visible on the fuselage. Note the Aldis telescopic sight taken from a British aircraft and mounted in front of the cockpit. The device mounted on the upper wing is probably a flare pistol

for him, also on account of the fact that his fighter was painted all black. I was far away from the lines and it was late, so I climbed and returned to base.'

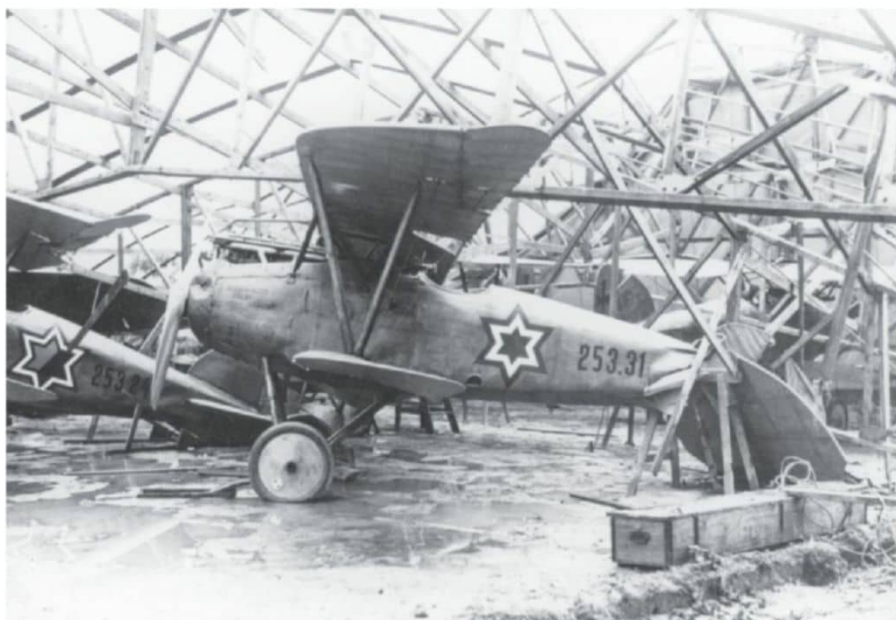
Two days later on 27th November Kiss became wounded during a dogfight with a group of Italian fighters of 78 Squadriglia, including those of Ace Antonio Riva and future Ace Guglielmo Fornagiarni. During a prolonged duel his gun jammed and he became wounded in the abdomen. Kiss managed to escape his adversary and fighting consciousness returned to his airfield, collapsing on arrival.

Following a short period of recuperation Kiss returned to duty, but would not achieve any more victories. On 24th May 1918 Kiss was shot down and crashed during combat with aircraft from the British 66 Squadron.

Flik 51J was another early fighter unit to receive Albatroses from the outset of its formation in August 1917. The unit would continue to fly the type up until the Armistice and as such included within its ranks some of the highest scoring Albatros aces.

Eugen Bönsch was part of Flik 51J's initial group of pilots under the command of Rittmeister Wedige von Froreich. Bönsch would receive his first confirmed kill when he downed a Nieuport fighter over Monte San Gabriele on 1st September. He would eventually reach a tally of sixteen confirmed victories, all of which were claimed in an Albatros. During the Battle of Vittorio Veneto which began on 24th October 1918, Bönsch was himself shot down but he managed to bail out of his stricken aircraft and land safely

**Left:** Albatros D.III (OEF) 253.31 was flown by Eugen Bönsch of Flik51J. The aircraft in the background was also flown by Bönsch as well as Benno Fiala. Note that the machine guns are in a raised position on this aircraft



Arigli and Kiss, the trio attacked three Italian two seaters south of Asiago-Arsiero. All three were shot down with von Maier receiving credit for two of them.

Julius Arigli achieved thirteen of his wartime record of thirty two victories while flying Albatroses with Flik 55J. Arigli was already an Ace with twelve kills to his name when he transferred to von Maier's newly formed unit in August 1917. His first victory at Flik 55J occurred on 15th September when he brought down a Spad near Gorizia. On 15th November Arigli was credited with three aircraft on the same day, a triple, when he brought down three Caproni bombers near Asiago.

Josef Kiss joined the Kaiser-Staffel in November having already attained seven victories as part of Flik 24, mostly in Hansas. Once he had transferred to Flik 55J, Kiss wasted no time in increasing his tally, beginning with a double on 15th November when he was credited with two Caproni bombers while flying with von Maier and Arigli. By the end of January 1918 Kiss had extended his total of victories to nineteen,

twelve of which were scored during his time at Flik 55J. On 25th January Kiss became involved in a one to one duel with Tenente Silvio Scaroni, who was himself an Ace, second only to Francesco Baracca in terms of victories. Scaroni later wrote of the incident: *'I immediately engaged the patrol leader and my companions took care of the other two. From the beginning I realised he was a pilot of great gallantry and exceptional ability. Whatever I did using the agility of my plane, I could never aim and fire effectively, he always cheated me, going through all the range of aerobatics in a perfect style and then trying to attack me. By manoeuvring and keeping almost always a slight ascendancy I managed to bring him down to 1,500 metres, but I had strayed away from the lines. We were now over Grigno, and I didn't see my companions, probably still duelling the other fighters. We were down to 100 metres level, one close against the other, when following one of my bursts he turned sharply, passed below me and although I followed him I lost him. It was getting dark and the dark background of the valley precluded my search*



behind enemy lines with the aid of a parachute. On landing he successfully evaded capture and made his way back through the lines to his unit.

In October 1917 Stefen Fejes was transferred to Flik 51J. Fejes was already an Ace having reached a tally of five victories mainly flying the two seat Hansa Brandenburg C.I. He did not begin to add to this figure until December 1917 when he successfully attacked an observation balloon over Visnadello. Fejes would eventually be credited with eleven confirmed victories during his period at 51J. His final claim occurred on 1st September 1918 when he shot down a Sopwith Camel near Arcade.

Perhaps the OEF Albatros' greatest exponent was Benno Fiala. When he was given command of Flik 51J towards the end of January 1918, Fiala was already an Ace with a total of nine victories, including one in an Albatros. He wasted no time in increasing his tally by shooting down a Sopwith Camel over the enemy territory of San Andre di Treviso on 21st January where the Camel was seen to crash in flames. Perhaps Fiala's most prolific period came in May when on the first day of the month he received credit for four confirmed victories in one day. The first of his victims on that day occurred around 9.10 in the morning when he shot down a Sopwith Camel over San Biaggio. Five minutes later, north of Povegliano, he claimed an Italian SIA two seater. Later that day, in the afternoon he brought down two balloons in flames. Two days later Fiala achieved a double victory, and another three days after that he achieved another double.

Benno Fiala would end the war with a total of twenty eight confirmed victories, of which twenty were achieved during his time as CO of Flik 51J. All of these victories were attained while flying the Albatros.

As a type, the OEF Albatros made a significant impact on the performance of the Austro-Hungarian units that flew them. To give some idea of how significant this was if

**Below: A 253 series D.III (OEF) in Polish service. This particular example has flying surfaces covered in an intricate swirl pattern fabric**

we take all of the victories achieved by Austro-Hungarian Aces (pilots and observers with five or more confirmed victories) during the Great War, the Albatros would account for approximately forty percent of the total. However this figure is a little unfair as in the Austro-Hungarian claims system if a two seater brought down an enemy aircraft, both the pilot and observer would be credited. Therefore, if we remove two seat victories from the equation the Albatros would account for around two thirds of all single seat fighter confirmed victories.

When Dr. Martin O'Connor interviewed Julius Arigi in 1977, the veteran pilot was asked to compare the various Austro-Hungarian fighter types that he flew: *'The Phönix fighters were the most sturdily built. They were very solid and dependable. You paid the price for this because they were less manoeuvrable and climbed more poorly. They were excellent in a dive since you could dive them as fast as you wanted without fear of tearing the wings off.'*

*The Berg was the opposite of the Phönix. It was light and extremely manoeuvrable but was weakly-built. There was a great tendency for the parts to bend and for the aircraft to actually lose parts of the wings or tail in violent manoeuvring or even in a not-too-steep dive. The Bergs shed their wing fabric easily.*

*The Albatros was almost the exact middle of the road in all aspects between the Phönix and the Berg.'*

#### THE ALBATROS IN FOREIGN SERVICE

The newly formed Polish Air Service purchased thirty eight series 253 Albatros fighters after the war. These began to arrive and go into service towards the end of August with the famous 7 *Eskadra* being one of the first units to be equipped with the type. The unit's commander at the time, 1st Lt Stefan Stec, had flown the Albatros while serving in Flik 3 of the Austro-Hungarian Air Service during the war and took an active role in the procurement of the type. Stec would however not fly the Polish Albatroses in active service

as he was sent to Paris to study at the *École Supérieure d'Aéronautique et de Construction Mécaniques* shortly after the aircraft had begun to arrive.

Stec's position as CO with 7 *Eskadra* would eventually be taken by Major Cedric Errol Faunt le Roy who would lead the squadron in sorties against the Bolshevik forces in 1920. Unlike the German and Austro-Hungarian Albatroses, which were used primarily to shoot down other aircraft, the Polish Albatroses took on an entirely different role as a ground attack aircraft, a role in which it proved to be very successful.

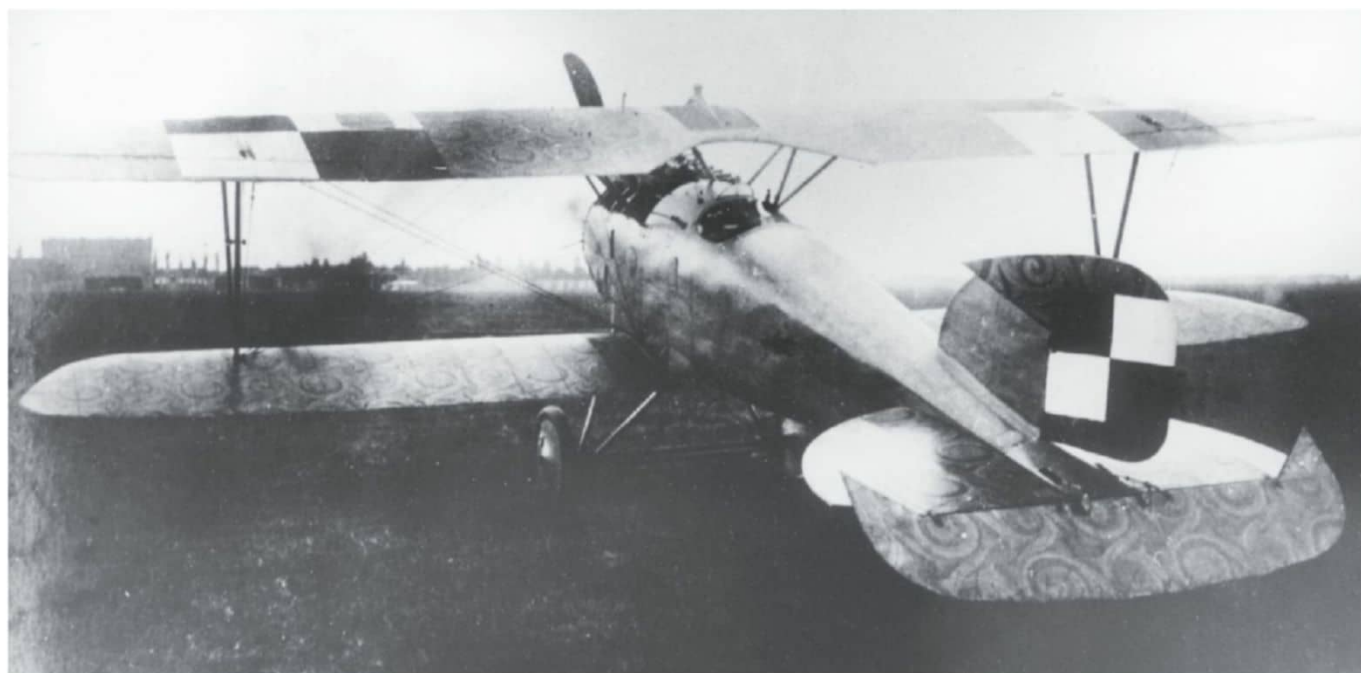
Alongside 7 *Eskadra*, 13 *Eskadra* is also known also known to have operated the Albatros. Officials in the Polish Air Service were so impressed with the type that they wrote a letter to Oeffag, praising the engineering work that had been done on the 253 series aircraft.

A pair of 53 series D.IIs were sold to Czechoslovakia in 1920. A 253 series D.III previously belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Ace Fredrich Navratil was also acquired by the Czechs but had a very short service life.

#### Author's Acknowledgements

Thank you to everybody who has contributed in some way to the production of this book either directly or indirectly. Special thanks to Jack Harris and James Fahey for generous use of their photographs, Jan Polc for his stunning artwork, Richard Andrews for the loan of some additional reference material and Gary Hatcher for getting the whole project started in the first place. Indirectly I could not have written this narrative without dipping in and out of the painstaking research of a number of 'real' historians including such names as late Peter Grosz, Greg Van Wyngarden, Trevor Henshaw, Alex Imrie and Norman Franks. Finally I would like to dedicate this book to present and past members of the IPMS Great War SIG which I have been fortunate enough to be part of since its formation.

Dave Hooper





# Albatros D.I – D.III

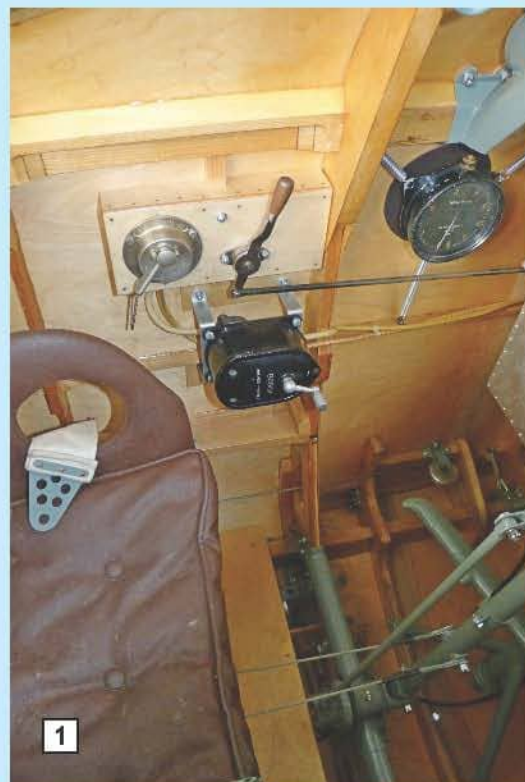
## IN DETAIL

Images depict a replica Albatros D.II operated by The Vintage Aviator Ltd in New Zealand. All photos by James Fahey



1. Directly to the pilot's left is the starter mechanism consisting of the engine switch, spark advance and magneto. The instrument on the right is the altitude indicator

2. Looking down at towards the base of the control column. At the top of the picture is the rudder bar. The cables attached to the control column on the right work the elevator







3. On the floor on the starboard side of the cockpit is the compass

4. The pilot's forward view of the cockpit. On the right hand side of the cockpit is the fuel and air switch board, grease pump and fuel tank

5. A clear view of the gun mounting bar with the tachometer in the centre between to two gun butts

6. A nice shot clearly showing the control column and rudder bar. Note the circular shape of the hand grip that was present on the early Albatros D-types. This would evolve to become more angular in later Albatroses



9



10

7. Looking forward is the control column and ammunition magazine. The instrument at the top of the photograph is the tachometer pressurising pump. The instrument next to the switch board is the fuel gauge

8. The Morell tachometer was commonly used in

German aircraft during the World War I period

9 - 11. Three views of the pilot's seat from different angles with a World War I style lap seatbelt. The seat covering could have been made from leather or a leather substitute



8



11



# Albatros D.I – D.III

IN DETAIL *continued*



12



13



14



16

12. Looking down on to the top rear section of the engine and decompression lever

13. Looking down on to the fuel tank from the engine compartment

14. A fine shot of the engine from the front of the aircraft, looking down the barrels of the two Spandau machine guns

15. The exhaust and exposed section of the engine showing the top of the cylinders and rocker arm

16. An overhead view of the Teves and Braun wing mounted radiator

17. The underside of the wing radiator showing the inlet and outlet pipes

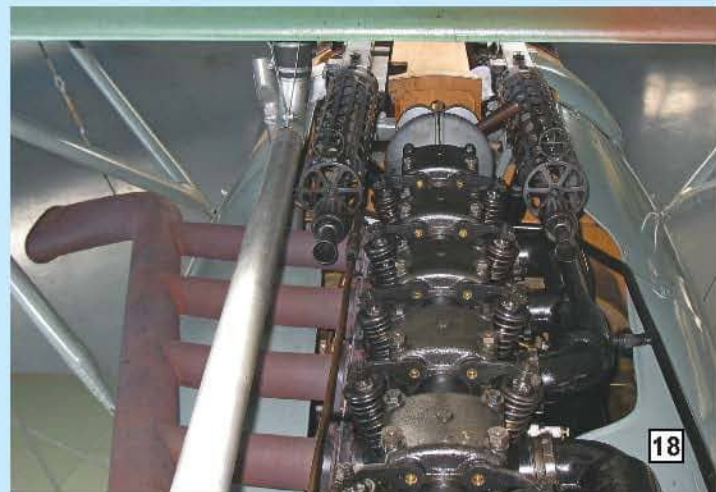


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18. Looking at along the engine rocker arm from the front (and slightly above) the engine

19. The front cylinder showing the spark plug and primer cup clearly

20. A close up of the rear of the engine

21. A close up view of the Spandau machine gun and ammunition feeder

22. Looking down the port side of the fuselage from the rear

23. The tail section of the D.II. The dots along the edge of each panel are nail heads

24. Looking at the cockpit opening from the port side of the aircraft



23



24



# Albatros D.I – D.III

IN DETAIL *continued*



25. Looking at the cockpit opening from the starboard side of the aircraft

26. The wing joint and undercarriage looking from the rear starboard side of the aircraft

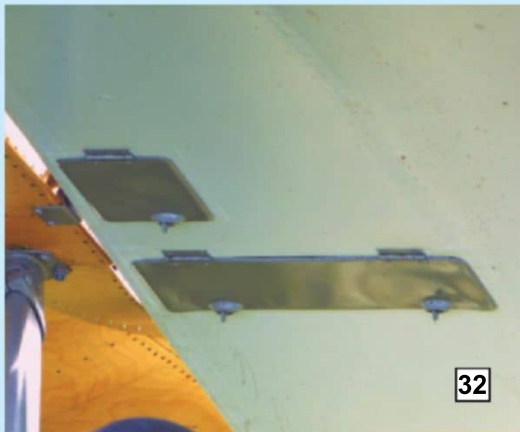
27. In front of the cockpit opening on the port side of the aircraft. The domed fairing fits over the empty ammunition belt chute which appears to be held in place by a series of turnkeys







31



32



33



34



35

28. An interesting and unusual view of the underside of the fuselage showing the various inspection panels and fittings

29. The distinctive tail skid of the Albatros

30. The starboard wheel and undercarriage detail showing the bungee cords

31. The nose panel and spinner of the D.II

32. Inspection panels on the underside of the lower wing allow access to the aileron control cables and pulleys

33. A view of the starboard side cabane struts. Note the position of the turnbuckles as a good

example that they were not always fitted to one end of the bracing wire

34. Another shot of the underside of the vintage aviator replica D.II. Note the oil streaks

35. The upper half of the interplane struts. Note that the turnbuckles of the flying wires were fitted to the upper wing, in an opposite manner to the landing wires. Also note that the rigging cable was made up of a number of smaller strands, usually seven wires, made up of fourteen or nineteen strands

36. The port side of the forward fuselage and cowling



36



# Albatros D.I – D.III

IN DETAIL *continued*



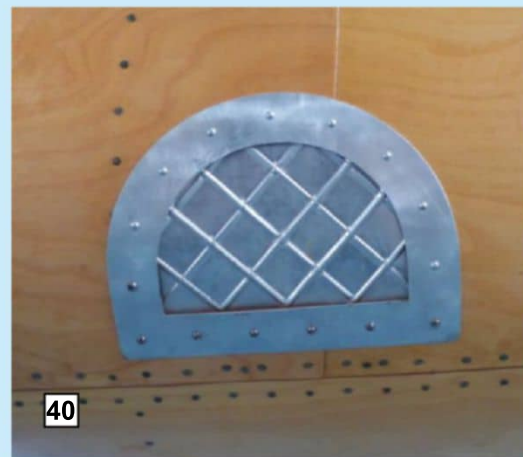
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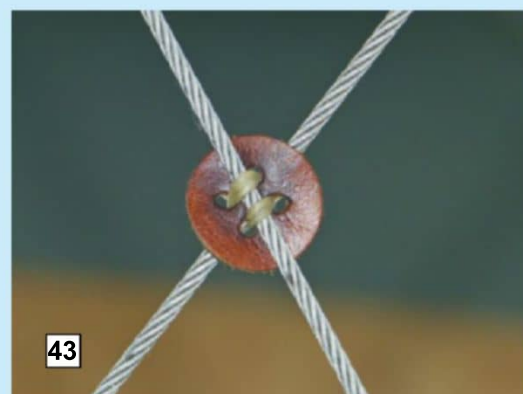
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37. Another shot of the underside of the fuselage with a good view of the bracket that sits between the undercarriage strut fittings

38. A close-up view of the starboard side nose and cowl

39. A good illustration off the dark and pale propeller laminations of the propeller

40. Interesting close-up detail of the footplate

41. A close-up shot of the four cups that drive the anemometer proving the pilot with an indication of the airspeed

42. The starboard side of the fin, close enough to see the wood grain clearly





44



45



47



46

43. A small piece of leather is fitted to the incidence wires at the point that they intersect

44. A close-up of the maker's name plate and military identification plate situated on the port side nose

45. Looking down the starboard side of the fuselage from the rear

46. The D.II looking from the rear of the aircraft

47. A view of the starboard side tail section

48. The Vintage Aviator D.II taxiing with the engine running



48



# Albatros D.I - D.III - Kits, Decals and Accessories

Manufacturer	Reference	Scale	Version
<b>Aircraft kits (injection)</b>			
Battle Axe	BX3204	1:32	Albatros D.III with etched and resin parts.
Battle Axe	BX3205	1:32	Oeffag Albatros D.III.
Blue Max	BM114	1:48	Albatros D.III (oef) 53, 153 and 253 series
Classic Plane	CPL28	1:72	Albatros D.I/II
Eduard	EDK11124	1:48	Albatros D.III OEFFAG Viribus Unitis Limited Edition kit of Austro-Hungarian fighter aircraft The Dual Combo style kit offers one 153 Series and one 253 Series aircraft. - plastic parts: Eduard - No. of decal options: 9 - decals: Eduard
Eduard	EDK7032	1:72	Albatros D.III
Eduard	EDK7033	1:72	Albatros D.III PROFIPACK
Eduard	EDK8017	1:48	Albatros D.III early version Richthofen
Eduard	EDK8035	1:48	Albatros D.III ProfiPACK with resin parts
Eduard	EDK8038	1:48	Albatros D.III O.A.W
Eduard	EDK8080	1:48	Albatros D.III early version
Eduard	EDK8081	1:48	Albatros D.III ProfiPACK
Eduard	EDK8082	1:48	Albatros D.III
Eduard	EDK8097	1:48	Albatros D.III PROFIPack
Eduard	EDK8241	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag 153
Eduard	EDK8242	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag 253
Eduard	EDK84150	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag 153 (Weekend Series)
Eduard	EDK84152	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag 253 (Weekend Series)
Eduard	EDK8436	1:48	Albatros D.III (Weekend Series)
Eduard	EDK8437	1:48	Albatros D.III (Weekend Series)
Eduard	EDK8438	1:48	Albatros D.III
Encore Models	EE32001	1:32	Albatros D.II Boelcke
Encore Models	EE72103	1:72	Albatros D.III (Oef) Kosciuszko Albatros 'Cooper'
Entex	ENT8463A	1:72	Albatros D.III
Esci	ES9021	1:72	Albatros D.III
Gavia	GAV015	1:48	Albatros D.I with etched parts and seated pilot figure
Glencoe	GL5102	1:48	Albatros D.III Austro-Hungarian
Glencoe	GL5101	1:48	Albatros D.III
Hit Kit	HK7207	1:72	Albatros D.III (Oeffag) series 253 with etched parts, swirl decals and many extra decals
Hit Kit	HK7203	1:72	Albatros D.III Oef 53/153
Hit Kit	HK7204	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag seri 153 includes etched parts
Hit Kit	HK7205	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag seri 253 Includes 'Swirl' fabric decal and etched parts
HR Model	HR7201	1:72	Albatros D
HR Model	HR7202	1:72	Albatros D.III early version
HR Model	HR7203	1:72	Albatros D.III late version
HR Model	HR7204	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag 253
Italeri	IT1374	1:72	Royal_Aircraft_Factory S.E.5a & Albatros D.III Combo Set
Maintrack Models	MN4801	1:48	Albatros D.III
Meikraft	MEI13	1:72	Albatros D.I/D.II
Merlin Models	MN41	1:72	Halberstadt D.V/Albatros D.XI
Pegasus	PEG1029	1:72	Albatros D.III / D.II.
Pegasus	PEG1028	1:72	Albatros D.III German and OAW versions. 2 tails and decals for both versions.
Pegasus	PEG1027	1:72	Albatros D.III Oef 53/153/25 with full winter cowlings and open engine cowlings
Revell	RV4328	1:72	Albatros D.III
Revell	RV4062	1:72	Albatros D.III
Roden	ROD614	1:32	Albatros D.I
Roden	ROD606	1:32	Albatros D.III
Roden	ROD608	1:32	Albatros D.III (OAW)
Roden	ROD001	1:72	Albatros D.I
Roden	ROD006	1:72	Albatros D.II
Roden	ROD018	1:72	Albatros D.II
Roden	ROD012	1:72	Albatros D.III
Roden	ROD030	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag S.152 late
Roden	ROD024	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag S.153 (early)
Roden	ROD026	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag S.253
Roden	ROD022	1:72	Albatros D.III Oeffag S.53.2
Smer	SR816	1:48	Albatros D.III
Smer	SR115	1:48	Albatros D.III
Smer	SR940	1:48	Albatros D.III (SMER) and Sopwith Triplane (Eduard)
<b>Aircraft kits (resin)</b>			
Sram	SRAM4410	1:144	Albatros D.I
Sram	SRAM11D	1:144	Albatros D.I with decals
Sram	SRAM4412	1:144	Albatros D.II
Sram	SRAM12D	1:144	Albatros D.II with decals
Sram	SRAM4401	1:144	Albatros D.III
Sram	SRAM01D	1:144	Albatros D.III with decals
<b>Aircraft kits (vacform)</b>			
Xtravac	XV04	1:72	Albatros D.III with Paragon resin parts.
<b>Aircraft decals (military)</b>			
AeroMaster	AMD72234	1:72	Albatros D.I/Albatros D.III Woodgrain Pattern for propeller blades and fuselage
Blackbird Models	BMD48001	1:48	Imperial German Air Service Includes Albatros D.III 1 Jasta 29 German AS
Blackbird Models	BMD72001	1:72	Imperial German Air Service Includes Albatros D.III 1 Jasta 29 German AS
Blackbird Models	BMD72006	1:72	Turkish War of Independence Includes Albatros D.III unknown unit Turkish AF 1920AirCo
Blue Rider	BR234	1:72	Albatros D.III. 4 Austro-Hungarian and Polish D.IIIIs including a unique printed Sworl fabric camouflage schemes double sheet
Blue Rider	BR502	1:48	Austro-Hungarian WW1. Includes Albatros D.III
Blue Rider	BR230	1:72	Carinthian Air War Slovenian Air Units Part 2. Includes Albatros D.III (2)
Blue Rider	BR246	1:72	Carinthian Border War 1918/19 Part 3 Includes Albatros D.III
Blue Rider	BR216	1:72	Lithuanian sheet 2 19-19-30. Includes Albatros D.III
Blue Rider	BR411	1:72	Oeffag Albatros D.III (4) Czechoslovak Air Force 253. 116 2 versions; Polish Air Force x 2
Blue Rider	BR201	1:72	Polish Air Force 1. 1919-1920 Includes Albatros D.III
Blue Rider	BR265	1:72	Post WWI Austrian aviation. Austrian Aviation from the period 1919-1931. Includes Albatros (Oef.) D.III BA 253 (3 schemes), Albatros (Oef.) D.III BA 153 (2 schemes)
FCM	FCM72019	1:72	Albatros D.III (Oef) (11) Flik 41J Hptm Godwin Brumowsky CO; 253.117 Flik 3J Obli Stefan Stec; 53.46 Flik 3 Kpl Rudolf Blass; 153.46 Flik 51J Zgf Eugen Bonsch; 153.33 Flik 51J Rittmeister von Froeich CO; Flik 41J Hptm Brumowsky; 153.03 Flik 42J; 53.60 Flik 41J Offstz Kurt Gruber; 153.37 Flik 2; BA253 7th Kosciuszko Sqn Polish Air Force; Phonix D.IIa 424.14 Flik 56J Felwebel Kasza.

Manufacturer	Reference	Scale	Version
FCM	FCM48017	1:48	Includes Albatros D.III Yellow 2 153.255; Jasta 50 Fritz Lise
FCM	FCM32016	1:32	Includes Albatros D.III Jasta 24 Offz Freidrich Altemeier three concentric black discs
FCM	FCM32015	1:32	Includes Albatros D.III Jasta Boelcke Otto Hunzinger white fuselage band with black lines
FCM	FCM72017	1:72	Includes Albatros D.III Yellow 2 153.255; Jasta 50 Fritz Lise
FCM	FCM48016	1:48	Includes Albatros D.III Brown KP Jasta 32b Konrad Poralla; 53.37 Flik 24 Karl Bedo; Overall red Godwin Brumowski; Jasta 50 D2377 Vfw Wittenfeld
FCM	FCM72016	1:72	Includes Albatros D.III Brown KP Jasta 32b Konrad Poralla; 53.37 Flik 24 Karl Bedo; Overall red Godwin Brumowski; Jasta 50 D2377 Vfw Wittenfeld
FCM	FCM32014	1:32	Includes Albatros D.III
FCM	FCM0248	1:48	WWI German National Insignia, various styles and sizes plus limited stencilling for Albatros D.III etc
Formadecal	FPC72003	1:72	Includes Albatros D.III x 3; Albatros D.III OEF x 3
Galdecad	GAL72008	1:72	Finnish Collection Includes NAB-9 Albatros 1918
HGW	HGW548010	1:48	Albatros D.III OEFFAG BASE WHITE (Eduard kits)
HGW	HGW548015	1:48	Albatros D.III OEFFAG BASE WHITE (Eduard kits)
HGW	HGW548009	1:48	Albatros D.III OEFFAG TRANSPARENT (Eduard kits)
HGW	HGW548014	1:48	Albatros D.III OEFFAG TRANSPARENT (Eduard kits)
Lifelike	LL48039	1:48	Includes Albatros D.III Jasta 5 Lt D.Wolf Blue/White check fuselage with green tail; Lt R.Ernst Udet Silver Grey fuselage coded LO; Jasta 17 Georg Strasser; Jasta 5 Lt Wilhelm Boistrancourt Red fuselage with green tail.
Mirage Hobby Model Maker Decals	MIRD0002	1:48	Sworl camouflage pattern Albatros D.III 253 Oeffag
Model Maker Decals	D48100	1:48	Albatros D.III (OEF) in Polish Service + Flik 3J Polish pilots' planes
Model Maker Decals	D72100	1:72	Albatros D.III (OEF) in Polish Service + Flik 3J Polish pilots' planes
Print Scale	PSL72235	1:72	Albatros D.I & D.II Aces of WWI
Print Scale	PSL48042	1:48	Albatros D.III (Oef) 253.218; 2. Albatros D.III 253.64; 3. Albatros D.III 253
Print Scale	PSL72037	1:72	Albatros D.III (Def) 253,218 from the 7th escadra Myslyvska (Fighting Squadron). This aircraft belonged to kpt. Merlam Cooper Klev. May 1920; 2. Albatros D.III 253.64. This aircraft was flown by kpt. Geza Keist. August 1918
Print Scale	PSL72316	1:72	Austro-Hungarian Aces Albatros D.III -Fighters
Print Scale	PSL72227	1:72	Balloon-Busting Aces of WW I Part 1 - Germany
Propagteam Superscale	PPT72001	1:72	Includes Albatros D.III
Superscale	SS72770	1:72	Albatros D.III Richthofen
Superscale	SS480151	1:48	Albatros D.III & D.V (5)
Superscale	SS72147	1:72	Albatros D.III & D.V (8)
Superscale	SS480599	1:48	Albatros D.III (2) Jasta 10 Lt Erich Lowenhardt; Jasta 30 Lt Joachim von Betrab 1917
Superscale	SS480598	1:48	Albatros D-II (2) Jasta5 Lt Werner Voss; Jasta 28 Vzfw Barenfanger 1917
<b>Aircraft conversions (injection)</b>			
Hi Tech	HT148201	1:48	Albatros D.I with FCM decal (Eduard EDK8080 D.II kits)
<b>Aircraft conversions (resin)</b>			
Karaya	KY48003	1:48	Albatros D.I (Eduard kits)
<b>Aircraft detailing sets (etched)</b>			
Eduard	ED48263	1:48	Albatros D.III (Eduard kits)
Eduard	ED32583	1:32	Albatros D.III PRE-PAINTED IN COLOUR! (Roden kits)
Eduard	EDFE793	1:48	Albatros D.III Weekend (Eduard kits)
HGW	HGW132040	1:32	Albatros D.III/D.IIIA radiator (Wingnut Wings kits)
HGW	HGW148004	1:48	Albatros D.III/D.V 2 sets of microplastic seatbelts with etched buckles (Wingnut Wings kits)
HGW	HGW32006	1:32	Albatros D.III/D.V seat belts. Photo-etch with printed harnesses (Wingnut Wings/Roden kits)
HGW	HGW32007	1:32	Albatros D.III/D.V seat belts. Photo-etch with printed harnesses (Wingnut Wings/Roden kits)
<b>Aircraft detailing sets (metal)</b>			
Scale Aircraft Conversions	SAC32037	1:32	Albatros D.III Landing Gear (Roden kits)
<b>Aircraft detailing sets (resin)</b>			
Black Dog	BDA48001	1:48	Albatros D.I/D.II detail set. Separate flying surfaces, wheels etc (Eduard kits and Gavia kits)
Mastercasters	MST32023	1:32	Albatros D.III detail set (Roden kits)
RES-IM	RESIM4830	1:48	Albatros D.III fuel tank (Eduard kits)
RES-IM	RESIM4829	1:48	Albatros D.III exhausts (Eduard kits)
Quickboost (by Aires)	QB48840	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag series 153/253 exhaust (Eduard kits)
<b>Aircraft paint masks (self adhesive)</b>			
Montex	MXMM32122	1:32	Albatros D.III (OAW) 2 insignia masks (Roden kits)
Montex	MXK32202	1:32	Albatros D.III 3 insignia masks (Roden kits)
Montex	MXK32111	1:32	Albatros D.III 4 insignia masks (Roden kits)
Montex	MXK32201	1:32	Albatros D.III 4 insignia masks (Roden kits)
Eduard	EDXS512	1:72	Albatros D.III/Albatros D.V. National Insignia paint masks.
Eduard	EDXF517	1:48	Albatros D.III/D.V National Insignia (Eduard kits)
<b>Aircraft seats (resin)</b>			
Quickboost (by Aires)	QB48839	1:48	Albatros D.III Oeffag seat (Eduard kits)
RES-IM	RESIM4828	1:48	Albatros D.III seat (Eduard kits)
<b>Figures (resin)</b>			
Plus Model	PMAL4077	1:48	WWI Albatros pilot

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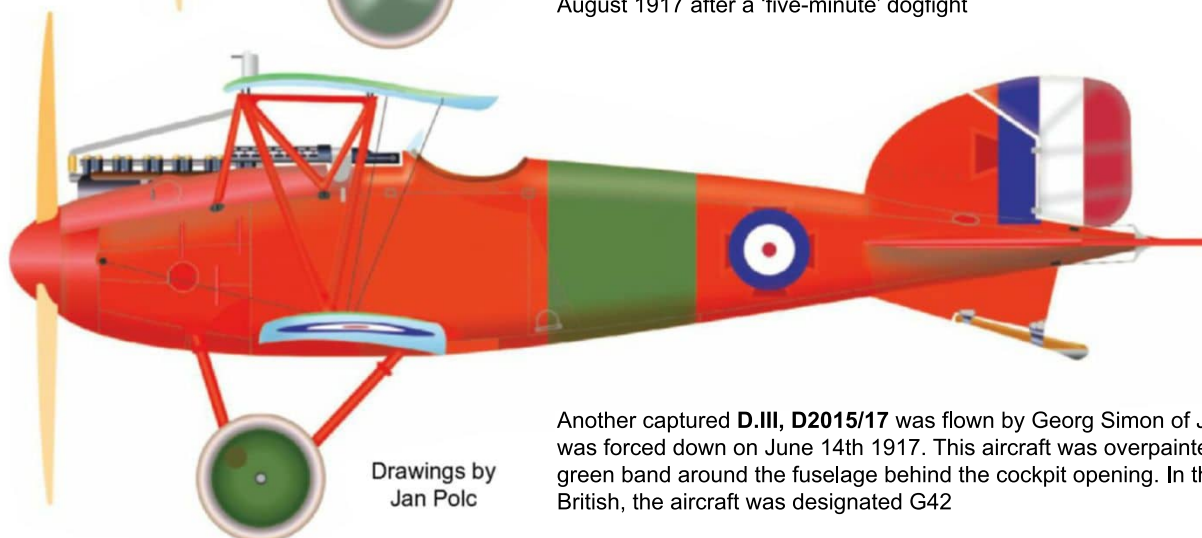
**D.III 2096/16 'Vera'** was brought down by Armand Pinsard of Spa.78 between Nauroy and Moronvilliers on April 21st 1917. Its pilot, Leut Wilhelm Wichard of *Jasta* 24, was taken prisoner. 'Vera' is seen here after French markings have been applied over the German national insignia



**Albatros D.III** of *Jasta* Boelcke flown by Lt. D. R. Wilhelm Prien in June 1917. The aircraft was originally flown by Friedrich Kempf. Prien added the white circles and thin vertical white line over the top of Prien horizontal white striped personal marking.



**Albatros D.III** overpainted in what is thought to have been black. This was the personal aircraft of Leut. Joachim von Bertrab of *Jasta* 30. Note the centrally mounted radiator. Bertrab was shot down by Mick Mannock on 12 August 1917 after a 'five-minute' dogfight



Another captured **D.III, D2015/17** was flown by Georg Simon of *Jasta* 11 when it was forced down on June 14th 1917. This aircraft was overpainted in red with a green band around the fuselage behind the cockpit opening. In the hands of the British, the aircraft was designated G42

Drawings by  
Jan Polc

A line-up of late war OAW Albatroses assigned to Jasta 50. D.2362/17 belonged to Fritz Liese, while behind D.2377/17 was flown by Wilhelm Wittenfeld. Further back the fourth aircraft in the line-up is D.2368/17 associated with Leut R. Buddeberg



This camouflaged D.III is thought to have been flown by Leut Rudolf Hohberg of Fl.Abt. A 263

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