

World War I in Pictures

Air & Space Magazine



In anticipation of next year's world war I centennial, the United Kingdom's Imperial War Museums and Alfred A. Knopf have produced a stirring retrospective: *The Great War: A Photographic Narrative*. The 20th century's first titanic upheaval created a line between old world and new; when the war ended, almost nothing was the same as it had been.

Among the changes documented in *The Great War* is the introduction to warfare of a new weapon: the airplane. As the photographs in this gallery show, airpower created not only a new kind of fighting but also a new type of war hero. After French pilot Adolphe Pégoud shot down five German aircraft, French newspapers began referring to him as an "ace," an honorific still used to describe combat pilots with five or more victories.

The first world war was a period of intense aeronautical invention, and the variety of aircraft produced was captured on film, from Germany's Zeppelins and Fokkers to France's Nieuports and England's Sopwith Camels. The two technologies—aeronautics and photography—were soon combined. In January 1915, the Royal Flying Corps produced the first mosaic of aerial

photographs. By March of that year, Corps photographers were using hand-held cameras to document pilots flying at 800 feet during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. In May, French photographers began using autochrome film to take the first color images of war.

Throughout the coming year, there will undoubtedly be many reconsiderations of World War I. Here at Air & Space magazine, we will recapture pilots' experiences through diaries and memoirs; interview the descendants of Norman Prince, who founded the American air volunteer service, the Lafayette Escadrille; and examine how aerial tactics invented in the airplane's first war continue to influence military pilots today.

From *The Great War: A Photographic Narrative* by Mark Holborn and Hilary Roberts, © 2013 by Jonathan Cape and IWM.

Pictured: In 1918, the Royal Flying Corps, now renamed the Royal Air Force, finally established air superiority over the Germans and, using its recently acquired fleet of heavy bombers, launched a strategic bombing campaign over Germany. Left: RAF Handley Page O/400 bombers, Coudekerque airfield, near Dunkirk, France, April 20, 1918.



Heeresgeschichtliche Museum, Vienna

The bloodied tunic of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, whose assassination sparked the action that utterly transformed warfare.



IWM Photograph Archive, File No. q 12051

For the first time, battles were fought in the air. Royal Flying Corps pilots assemble with their S.E.5a Scouts, one of the fastest aircraft of the war.



IWM Photograph Archive, File No. Q 23917

Trophies collected from aircraft shot down by Oberleutnant Manfred von Richthofen, also known as the Red Baron, at his family home, Schweidnitz, Germany, May 1917.



IWM Photograph Archive, Q 52781

Visiting von Richthofen, their commander, in the hospital on August 14, 1917, pilots of Jagdgeschwader 11, known informally as the Flying Circus, brought a gift: a British aircraft propeller. Von Richthofen sustained a serious head wound on July 6, 1917, while in combat with fighter aircraft of No. 20 Squadron Royal Flying Corps. He never fully recovered from his injuries.



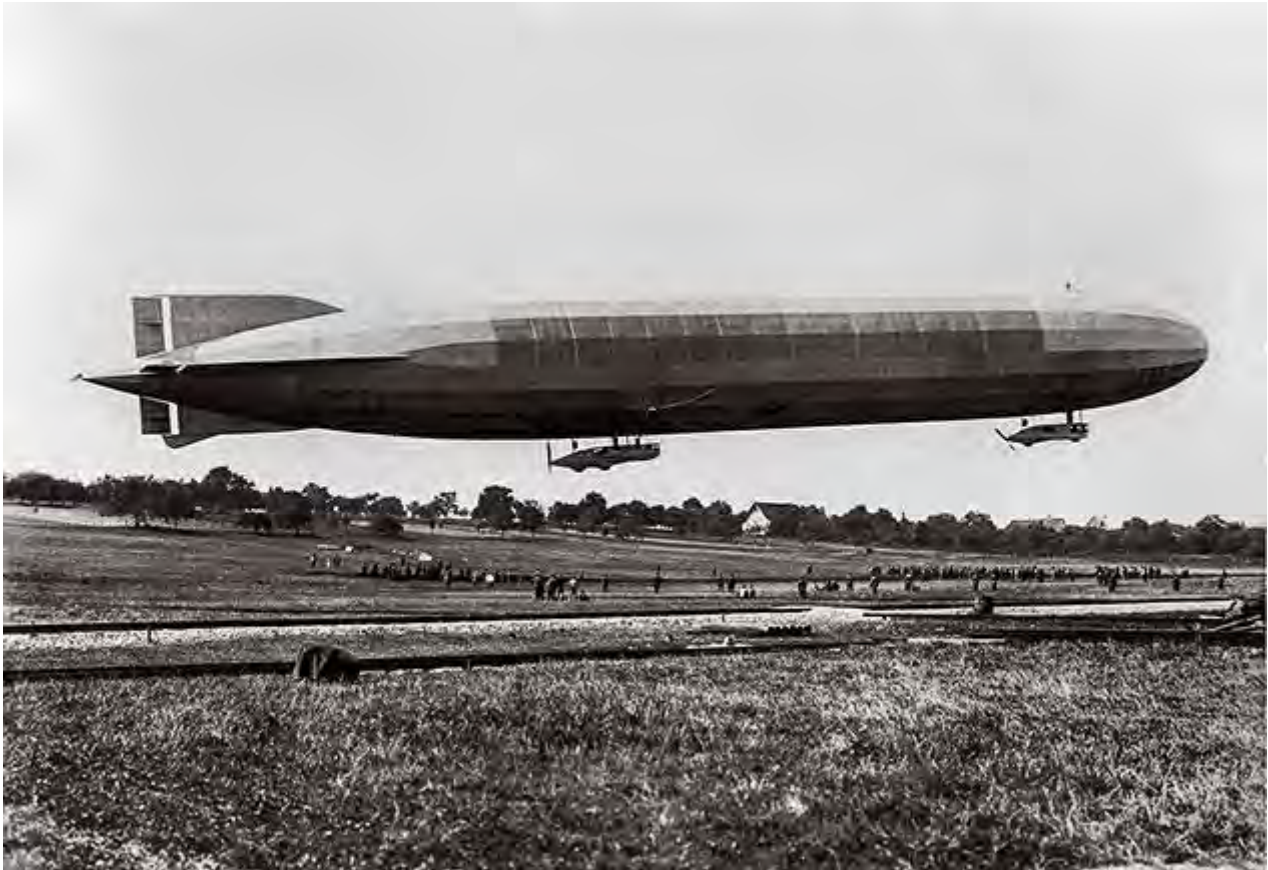
IWM Photograph Archive, File No. E (AUS) 1175

An observer, wearing a parachute, disembarks from the basket of an Australian observation balloon, Ypres Salient, Belgium, October 23, 1917. On the Western Front, static observation balloons were primary targets. Observers had a high fatality rate, and were the only aviators routinely equipped with parachutes. Developed in 1915, the chutes were unreliable and used only as a last resort.



IWM Photograph Archive, File No. HU 67786

Aerial photography kept Allied commanders informed about Germany's development of the defensive position known as the Hindenburg Line. Outside its mobile darkroom, a Royal Flying Corps Photographic Section, above, displays a giant mosaic, assembled from aerial photographs, showing a section of the Western Front, September 18, 1917.



IWM Photograph Archive, Q 58481

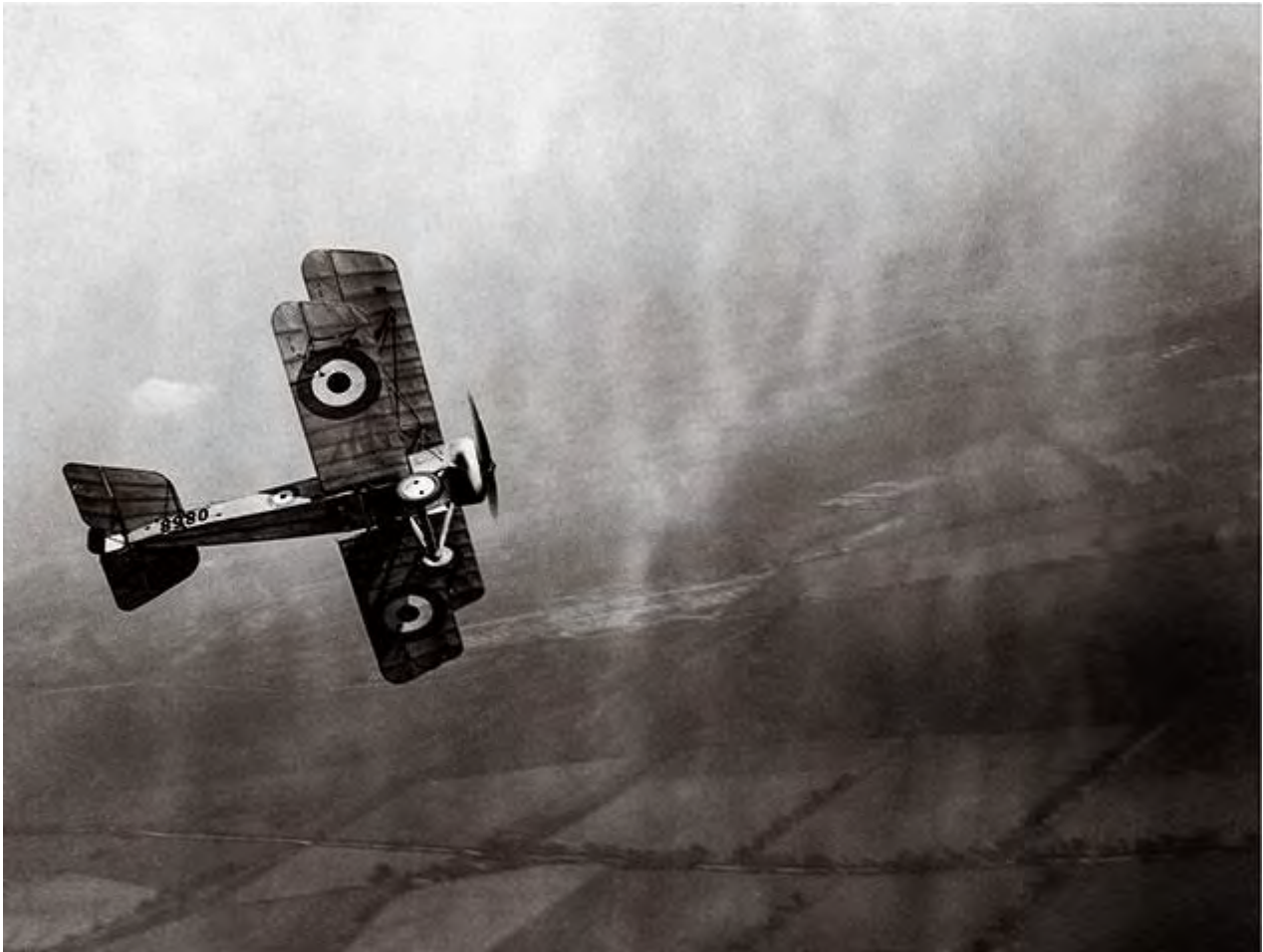
German Zeppelin LZ 77 shortly before it was shot down at Revigny during the opening phase of the Battle of Verdun, France, February 21, 1916. Verdun was the war's longest battle, lasting 298 days. At least 1.14 million French and 1.25 million German soldiers fought in it. The Germans filled 1,300 trains with 2.5 million shells to bring to the conflict. It is estimated that there were 550,000 French and 434,000 German casualties.



IWM Photograph Archive, CO 1744

Pilots credited with shooting down five or more enemy aircraft achieved the status of ace. Most had a life expectancy of a few weeks. The casualty rate was heightened by a belief that it was cowardly to wear a parachute.

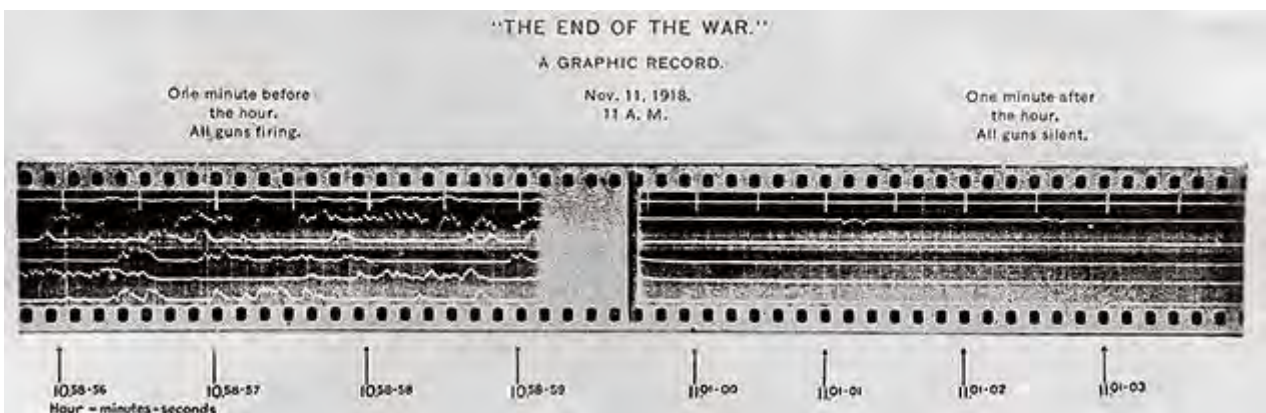
Lieutenant Colonel William A. "Billy" Bishop, a Canadian ace serving with No. 60 Squadron RFC, checks the Lewis gun in the cockpit of his Nieuport 17, Filescamp Farm, near Arras, France, August 1917.



IWM Photograph Archive, File No. Q 73774

A Royal Naval Air Service Bristol Scout D during a reconnaissance mission over the Western Front, February 1916.

One of the first British single-seat fighter aircraft, the Bristol D was developed primarily for scouting. It was fast and maneuverable. The aircraft above was based on the HMS Vindex, a Royal Navy seaplane carrier operating in the North Sea.



IWM Photograph Archive, Q 47886

A sound trace recorded by artillery sound-ranging equipment on 35-mm film provides a visual record of the moment when the guns fell silent on the Western Front, November 11, 1918. The left portion of the film records one minute before the Armistice, with all guns firing. The right portion records one minute after the hour: all guns silent.