

JACK'S WAR by Desmond Furze

Stanley Jack Furze was born at Bromleys Farm, Harlow, Essex on 3 September 1899. Second son of a farming family he was privileged to have access to a motor car and learned to drive and ride a motor cycle in his early teens. He was also quite keen on sport and later played football for Manuden, his village team.

Educated at Bishop's Stortford College he attempted to join the army soon after the outbreak of World War One, when the family were living in Bishop's Stortford, by absconding from school and endeavouring to enlist in the Hertfordshire Yeomanry at Hertford Barracks.

He was thwarted in this action by his father and forced to knuckle down at school for a further period. However, he was more successful in a second attempt and on 8 November 1915 he joined the motor transport section of the Army Service Corps giving his age as 18.

His initial training was carried out at Hazeley Down Camp, Aldershot and after an incident – when he managed to crash a lorry loaded with ammunition in the Blackwall Tunnel – he was posted to France and commenced his overseas service in the Ypres Salient as a motorcyclist.

Little is known of his activities in this area over the next 12 months or so, but some time at the beginning of 1917, following an incident in which he helped to retrieve some artillery guns from a fire caused by enemy shelling, he was recommended for a commission and chose to join the Royal Flying Corps. A formal application was made on 24 April while he was serving with the Motor Transport section of 'G' Battery, Anti-aircraft Group of the 2nd Army.

On 19 June 1917 'G' Battery was transferred to the 5th Army on the Somme Front and it was here on 12 August that his application was approved by Lt Col T.C. Newton, Officer Commanding 5th Army Anti-aircraft Group.

He returned to England and records obtained from the Royal Air Force show that he was posted to the Royal Flying Corps recruiting centre at South Farnborough on 12 August 1917 and on 3 September to No 10 Cadet Wing, which was situated at Denham, Bucks.

On 5 October he was passed as fit for pilot training and on the 21st was transferred to No 5 School of Aeronautics, also at Denham, then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on 30 November, as reported in the *London Gazette* on 5 December 1917.

1 January 1918 saw him posted to No 31 Training Squadron, Wyton, Huntingdonshire where on 27 February he qualified for his 'wings'. During this period he managed to fly several types of aircraft including the old Maurice Farman Shorthorn, BE2e and later RE8, Martinsyde Elephant and DH9.

At some time during this period he landed a training aircraft at his home on the farm at Manuden Hall, Essex, possibly during a cross country flight which formed part of his flying training.

With a group of Belgian friends, somewhere near Ypres, 1916. A primitive gas-protection suit features conspicuously.



Jack Furze as a motorcyclist in Belgium, 1916.

On 28 March he was at No 4 Auxiliary School of Aerial Gunnery at Marske-by-Sea, Yorkshire, where he flew the Bristol Fighter, SE5a and Sopwith Camel, and in April he was at No 1 School of Navigation and Bomb Dropping Stonehenge, flying the DH4 and DH9. This concluded his training in the UK and on 4 June, after some leave, he joined 205 Squadron RAF, stationed at Bois de Roche aerodrome near Conteville under the command of Major S.J. Goble, DSO DSC.

The squadron, formerly No 5 Royal Naval Air Service, before formation of the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918, was flying the DH4 two-seater bomber reconnaissance aircraft and Jack's first flight with the squadron was on 5 June 1918, a practice photographic sortie of one hour fifteen minutes, with Lt Hollingsworth as observer. Six photographs were taken. Other practice flights took place to enable him to become familiar with the aircraft and the sector in which the squadron was operating and his first operational flight was on 26 June in machine A8030 with 2Lt Leach as Observer. It was a photographic reconnaissance flight of two hours thirteen minutes, commencing at 0730 hours, in the Amiens area and records show that 54 photos were taken and conditions were very cloudy.

The main bombing objectives of 205 Squadron during the month of June 1918 were Rosières station and ammunition dump and also the dump at Omiecourt. Some 284 112lb bombs were dropped on these targets with good results in spite of very serious and accurate anti-aircraft fire. In addition the enemy aerodrome at Foucaucourt and the dumps and stations at La Plateau, Chaulnes, Mesières and Bray railway sidings also received attention from 232 112lb bombs.

The main photographic work for the 22 Wing was carried out by 205 Squadron when, in spite of adverse conditions, 2183 photographs were taken. On 26 and 27 June, Jack piloted DH4 A8030 with 2Lt Leach as observer on flights of more than two hours duration, taking photographs east of Amiens at heights of around 13000 feet despite bad weather