

CAPTAIN A.F. MARLOWE RNAS



Part 2 – a Photographic Montage

By Bob Lynes and Stuart Leslie

Grahame-White XV, 3156, flown by A.F. Marlowe on 2 December 1915 at Chingford.

:JMB/GSL Collection

‘The War Diary of a Naval Airman 1915-1918’ by Peter Cooksley appeared in Vol 21/2 of the *Cross and Cockade International Journal*. It had been taken from the private diary of Captain A.F. Marlowe, RNAS and the twenty-two pages of the article cover day to day details for the period 2 September 1915 to 29 September 1918 and need little expanding upon here.

This article has always been my reference for the Aegean Theatre, and it became even more interesting in 1999 when I acquired Marlowe’s war medals: the British War and Victory Medals named to Capt A.F. Marlowe RAF, and his WWII Defence and War Medals with a Mentioned In Dispatches Oak Leaf [*London Gazette* 2 Jun 43] and a George VI Air Efficiency Medal, the last naming him as a Squadron Leader in the RAFVR.

With his medals came a file of ephemera which included: *Two concert programmes* [RNAS Stavros 1917 and No 2 Wing - ‘The Imbrosians’]

Six menus from the Aegean, the most interesting of which is shown here as it includes ‘Blotto’, a DH4 flown by Marlowe. Most of the menus have 20 to 30 signatures of pilots and observers on their reverse.

His original Aviator’s Certificate and a letter from the Royal Aero Club dated 30 December 1915 and addressed to Flt Sub-Lieut A.F. Marlowe, RNAS, Royal Naval Air Station, Chingford NE.

Ten mess bills which range from HMS *Excellent* in 1915, RNAS Chingford 1915-1916, ‘C’ Sqn No 2 Wing RNAS 1916, RNAS Stavros 1918 to RAF North Weald 1939 and RAF Officers’ Mess, No 2 Headquarters, Fighter Command 1943!

Ten letters [1977 to 1978] to the collector who had bought all of the above giving various wartime details including how he thinks he won his Mentioned In Dispatches in WWII – ‘while at Wittering near Stamford; an enemy aircraft started machine gunning and dropped a stick of bombs’. One exploded outside the mess and Marlowe remembers rushing out alone with a fire extinguisher and trying to put out the fires in several parked cars. He was alone there for some time and really enjoyed it as he ‘had always wanted to use a fire extinguisher!’

He also mentions in these letters his 500-600 photographs in albums from both wars, and had sold with his medals the same twelve pictures that were stuck into his diary which Peter Cooksley used in his article. The only difference was that mine had Marlowe’s descriptions on their reverses. However, having read the letters, I realised that the collector had got Marlowe to copy 60-70 more from his albums. I enquired if these had ‘survived’ and to my pleasant surprise these ‘Boots-copied’ pictures arrived. Marlowe also stated that ‘he had no one to leave his bits to’ so I wonder if his albums have survived?

Being a medal collector who occasionally gets one or two original photographs turning up, I felt slightly overwhelmed by this quantity! I therefore thought that a ‘Part 2’ article, heavier on the photographic side, and following on from Peter Cooksley’s original piece of 10 years ago and Stuart Leslie’s ‘From the Albums’ in Vol 21/4, would be of interest to members.

However, as my knowledge of aeroplane photographs is nil, it was time to approach Stuart Leslie with the hope that he would pick out the best and identify them. Just to add ‘fuel to the fire’ for Stuart, this year I purchased Marlowe’s original RNAS Log Book, which lists all of the serial numbers of aeroplanes that he flew at Chingford, Yarmouth, Bacton, on board HM Seaplane Carrier *Brocklesbury* and HM Trawler *Kingfisher*, and at Redcar, Mudros, Mytilene, Marsh and Stavros. These of course gave Stuart a field day with the Bruce/Leslie Collection, some photographs from which have been added here to the Marlowe pictures. As a bonus, Stuart had a photograph of Marlowe’s DH4 ‘Blotto’.

For my part I add details of Sqn Ldr Marlowe’s service career in both wars:

September 1914 – enlisted in the 17th Royal Fusiliers – trained in England and was promoted to Lance Corporal on 8 September 1914.

August 1915 – transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service – trained at Chingford, Essex. Gazetted as a Sub-Lieutenant, RNAS on 7 August 1915.

February 1916 – posted to Yarmouth Air Station for anti-Zeppelin and anti-submarine patrols over the North Sea. Flight Sub-Lieut RNAS in 1916.