

Much of the information in the following article and the line drawings are extracted from the book 'The Fokker Dr.I Triplane – a World War One Legend' by Paul Leaman published by Chevron Publishing in April 2003. They are thanked for allowing us the opportunity to reproduce them here. Harry Dempsey is thanked for allowing us to reproduce his coloured profile of the triplane part of which appeared in the book. Further thanks are given to Barry Weekley for allowing us to use his painting showing final moments of Dr.I 583/17 on 9 June 1918. Thanks must also be given to the staff of the Imperial War Museum, London and to 1 Squadron RAF for the opportunities they provided to examine the two rudders. (All photographs by the author except where stated.)

THE TRIPLANE'S RUDDER

Paul Leaman

In 1969 I wrote and illustrated a series of articles for the *Airfix Magazine* that were aimed at providing an 'in depth' study of the Fokker Dr.I triplane for modellers. Although presented at 1/72nd scale to tie in with the Airfix kit of the triplane, my drawings were detailed and were, I thought, the most accurate that had been published up to that time. I soon learned that, although I might be right in that assumption, there were still some areas that needed re-examination and some correction. One of the several criticisms came from Colin Huston (then a new acquaintance but now a colleague of many years and responsible for the typesetting and final layout of our Journal). At the time, Colin pointed out that I had missed the back section under the engine cowling that appeared only on the three FI triplanes, the windscreen that was fitted as standard to all production triplanes (but which was often altered or dispensed with in the field) and that the shape I had drawn for the rudder was basically wrong.

Over the years we have discussed this shape on a number of occasions without really satisfying ourselves on the subject. Then, in 1987, on a chance visit to the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth, London, I saw displayed in one of the cabinets what was assuredly the rudder from a Fokker Dr.I triplane. Taken by surprise by the sight of this, I returned

home and wrote to the museum explaining my interest and asking permission to be allowed to examine it at length. My request was granted and the rudder was removed from display for a day and I was allowed full and free access to it for as much of the day as I wished. During the time I had it in my hands I was able to sketch it, trace its outline, study it and its construction, weigh it, measure it and its component pieces, peer inside it through a small tear in its covering as well as to take many photographs of it. I went home delighted with what I had achieved and set about producing engineering drawings of what I had seen. At the time, I had no notion as from which triplane this rudder had been 'souvenired' as the museum's records on the subject appeared a little vague.

At a much later date, I was given the opportunity to visit 1 Squadron RAF at Wittering, Northamptonshire and to inspect a second authentic triplane rudder held in their museum. Again I went through the processes of measurement, weighing, sketching and photographing. This time, the source of the rudder was well documented. It had come from Fokker Dr.I 583/17 wn 2258 of *Jasta 14*. Lt J. C. Bateman of 1 Squadron RAF flying SE5a B8254 on 9 June 1918 had brought this triplane down, more or less intact, in the British front line. It had been one of two triplanes flown

A somewhat 'grainy' photograph of Ltn Werner Voss seated in triplane FI 103/17 waiting to take off. On the original photograph, the werke nummer – 1730 – can be seen painted at the bottom of the all white rudder. :Peter Grosz

