



The opponent of pilot Unteroffizier Ulle and observer Leutnant Carl Albert von Hesler was photographed in a training combat above Friemar near Gotha (FEA 3) in July 1916. :Sammlung von Hesler via AKSMG e.V.

Training in the German Air Force, 1914-1918

by Dr Hannes Täger – Part 2

Pilot Badge

Early in the war German pilots had to take three examinations. The first was called the **Pilot Examination**, and was identical with the examination for civilian pilots according to the rules of the *Deutscher Luftfahrer-Verband*. Max Immelmann described the procedure: 'The entire examination included take-off, flying five eights in the air, then to land where the instructor with the red banner was standing; to take off again, fly another five eights and to land like before. Finally you had to climb to at least 100m (328 feet) and glide in [for a landing with the engine turned off].'³⁷

For the 'flying of eights' two markers were placed on the ground at a distance of 500m (1640 feet). The pilot had to fly around these markings in a flight path forming a figure of eight. Every correctly flown '8' gave a flight distance of 1000 m (3048 feet) and the required five eights fulfilled the required minimum distance of 5km (3m) per flight. The aircraft had to be flight worthy after the landing.

Manfred von Richthofen flunked his first examination, as he did not succeed in flying 'eights', while Oswald Boelcke's first eights looked more like pretzels, but he was allowed to repeat the test immediately. Allegedly he had had only four solo flights before and the task was not explained to him properly. Kurt Jentsch made 30 solo flights before his first examination and Hans Brzenk made 37, but most trainees probably made more.

The second examination, called the **Field Pilot Examination**, resulted in the award of a pilot's licence for cross-country flights. According to Immelmann it required: '20 clean landings, two half hour flights (500m [altitude]) and finally the field pilot-examination itself: An hour long flight at least at 2000m (6560 feet) altitude and a glide from 800m (2625 feet) altitude.'³⁸

The third examination, called the **Flight Master Examination**, initially resulted in the award of the Pilot Badge (*Flugzeugführerabzeichen*). Flights over the enemy were added to the requirement for the pilot badge by the

order of the *Chef des Feldflugwesens* (Chief of the Air Service – until Fall 1916), No 364 Fl. of 22 April 1915.³⁹

On 1 January 1916 the exercises and examinations were adapted to the much tougher conditions of air combat on the front. In addition, the development from the 'standard aircraft' to different aircraft types was considered. Now separate examinations were given for pilots of **C and G aircraft**. [The following quote from Neumann, was summarized with bolding by the author]:⁴⁰

I. First examination

To be taken according to the rules of the *Deutscher Luftfahrerverband* as pilot sitting in the front or the back seat, but in each case without observer. Passing the examination made the student a **Pilot Trainee with 1st Examination** (*Flugschüler mit I. Prüfung*).

II. Mandatory exercises between 1st and 2nd examination

(Pilot sitting in front or back seat, without observer.)

- Ten landings over at least eight days. Glide from 800m altitude. Ballast and fuel as required.
- Five signal pistol landings. As soon as the flare is seen, turn off fuel and land. Ballast and fuel as required
- Five spot landings. Glide from 1000m altitude. Aircraft has to stop within a circle of 50m around the marker. Ballast 75kg, fuel as required.
- Five spot landings. Glide from 1000m altitude. Aircraft has to stop within a circle of 50m around the marker. Ballast 75kg, fuel tanks filled up.

III. Second Examination

(Pilot sitting in front or back seat, without observer.)

After reaching a flight altitude of 2000m a half hour flight at this altitude. Glide in for a clean landing from at least 1000m altitude. Ballast 75kg, fuel tanks filled up.

The examinations were only valid if no crash occurred, if the engine was throttled down to 800rpm at the correct altitude for the glide, and no fuel was given again. Now the student is called **Pilot Trainee with 2nd Examination** (*Flugschüler mit II. Prüfung*).