

# Lost South African Air Personnel Finally Identified

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GRAVES OF SECOND LIEUTENANTS  
J. C. RIMER AND R. H. LOWNDS, 43 SQUADRON, RFC,  
KILLED IN AERIAL COMBAT BY KARL ALLMENRÖDER  
OF JASTA 11 ON 17 MARCH 1917



*By Nicholas J. Severs*

The Arras Flying Services Memorial to the Missing commemorates nearly 1,000 airmen who died on the Western Front in the Great War and have no known grave. The remains of these airmen will in many cases have been buried by the Germans and subsequently lost in the battlefield, never to be recovered. Others, brought in from scattered burial sites after the war, will lie anonymously among the numerous graves of unknown servicemen in the cemeteries under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Most of the gravestones of the unknown in these cemeteries bear the sole inscription "A Soldier of the Great War - Known unto God", but on some the veil of anonymity is partially lifted with additional details such as date of death, rank and service or regiment. How often must relatives of the dead have searched in vain amongst these details for clues to the final resting places of their loved ones? With the passage of time since the original burials, the chances of using this information today to make a definitive identification of a hitherto unknown grave would appear slim indeed. Slim they may be, but the odds are not impossible, as this article highlights.

Here I report the identification of the graves of two airmen, Second Lieutenants J.C. Rimer and R.H. Lownds of 43 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps (RFC), who were killed in an air fight with Manfred von Richthofen's combat unit, Jasta 11, and who, until now, have been recorded as having no known graves.

## Graves of Unknown RFC Officers in Cabaret Rouge Cemetery

The graves in question are in Cabaret Rouge Cemetery near Vimy Ridge. In Row 16A of this cemetery there is a series of four graves, that of Second Lieutenant C. D. Knox RFC (grave A27), followed by two with the inscription "Unknown Officer Royal Flying Corps" (graves A28 and A29) and then Second Lieutenant A. L. Constable RFC (grave A30) (Figure 1). All four gravestones are inscribed with the same date of death, 17 March 1917 (Figure 2). The graves register records that Second Lieutenant Arthur Leslie Constable was killed in air combat

Figure 1. Layout of the four graves in Cabaret Rouge Cemetery.



on this date while serving with 43 Squadron RFC and that Second Lieutenant Charles Duncan Knox was an observer with the same squadron.

Inspection of the relevant report on Casualties to Personnel and Machines (when flying) shows that Second Lieutenant Constable and Second Lieutenant Knox were, in fact, flying in the same aircraft (Sopwith 2-seater A1097) as pilot and observer, respectively, when they were brought down near Beaumont on 17 March 1917 (Figure 3). The same set of casualty reports also reveals that a second Sopwith 2-seater (A1111) of the same squadron was brought down in the same location, on the same date (Figure 4). This aircraft was flown by Second Lieutenant J. C. Rimer (pilot) with Second Lieutenant R. H. Lownds (observer), both of whom are confirmed by Commonwealth War Graves Commission records as having died on the 17 March 1917. As Second Lieutenants Rimer and Lownds are listed as having no known grave, they are commemorated by name on the Arras Flying Services Memorial.

We thus have: 1) a pair of identified graves in which the pilot (Constable) is separated from his observer (Knox) by two graves of unknown RFC officers who met their deaths on precisely the same date; 2) casualty report information showing that, in addition to Constable and Knox, two further officers, Rimer and Lownds, in another aircraft of the same

Figure 2. Details of the inscriptions on the four graves.

