



Number 1 (Fighter) Squadron Assoc 1916-19 diary overview

Number 1 (Fighter) Squadron diary written exclusively by Lieutenant Stewart Keith-Jopp between the years 1916 and 1919, he started when he was 24 years old. (He is pictured on page 12 in the officer's mess, table nearest camera, facing forward and last on the right).

Condensed below are verbatim extracts from this diary which chart through pilot's selection, training, combat in war, injury and post injury flying instructing.

The electronic diary extract key is referenced by this new formatted page number **Page "X"** then cross referenced by the actual diary page if applicable **(in brackets)**.

Page 48 (42)

As he passed underneath, I saw it was a 2 seater, with 1 red and 1 yellow wing. 'Honk' thought I, a Hun.. a real Hun – what do I do now – attack I suppose. So I cart-wheeled and went down vertically at him.

Page 50 (46)

I saw several shadowy machines against this blue and then suddenly a bright red machine dived through the shaft of light. For a second or two, it shone like a red flame and then disappeared into the blue beyond.

(This was probably *Richtofen and his circus, as they came into our sector of the line that day).

**Richtofen - The Red Baron.*

Page 53 (48 and 49)

I was looking around, when I heard the familiar pop-pop-pop again quite close. I looked for the beggar everywhere, but couldn't spot him, when there was a most fearful bonk. I stood up in the belt and fairly yelled with fright, sat down again and saw petrol spurting all over my foot from the tank. I found that 3 shots had gone through the tank and between my legs, 2 through the tank sideways, 2 through the cowling, the wings and tail, one each, and about 10 through a wheel tearing off the tyre, one bullet went through my coat and into the seat, which I kept as a souvenir. While I was counting the holes a General came up and asked me why the blank blank, I'd left my patrol. I replied that I'd been shot down. Silly idiot!! He grunted and went away, while I carried my still warm bullet, with great delight to the mess.

His piece of leather coat with the bullet hole in is actually attached to the diary on page 50.

Page 54 (50 and 51)

Sullivan killed himself to-day, on his first flight in a Nieuport. Poor chap he got in a dive, like I did on the 20th, only his wings came off and mine didn't. It was a horrible crash and we had to put the bits in a blanket-Ugh!!

Page 55 (52)

Two more scraps today. I'm getting better at fighting, I was up with a new pilot, and a 2-seater Albatross came over. The other lad didn't see him, so I attacked by myself he saw me, and we had an elaborate game of tag. First he would scoot back to Hun land and I would pretend to give up, then he would come back and off we would go again before I could close. We did this for 10 minutes, until at last I dived out the sun

at him. His observer fell back into the cockpit and just as I was getting my sites on the pilot the gun jammed.

Page 57 (54 and 55)

I pulled the trigger – there was a terrific roar, and everything went black. My first thought was for my eyes, so I opened them and found they were alright, though a bit misty. What about my hands? So I held up my left hand, it was in an awful mess two finger and a thumb had gone, two fingers hanging down by a strip, and the rest – bits of bone and sinew, spurting. I had a look at my right hand – found it pretty gory, but all right except for the forefinger half of which was at right angles to the rest. I put this straight. Then a doctor came, dabbed a rag to my throat.*

*Hand written note at the bottom of the page – * He did this to see if I had neck artery cut. In which case he would have let me fade away in peace.*

Page 59 (56)

At twelve I was fit to see people and most of the Squadron came in.

Bits of pistol and hand had been blows 50 yards – some of it over the hanger. Nobody else had been hurt, although Rooper had had his leather coat torn of his back and the Sgt. Had had my forefinger and thumb in his face. They told me artificial hands were wonderful. So I decided to go on flying as I was very fed up at not having brought down a Hun officially.

Hand written note at the bottom of the page – One little incident – Feeling bad. I was cursing – After a bit a voice said "Cheer up, old man, the first day is the worst" – I looked at the next bed. The man in it had lost both his legs – I shut up at once.

Page 61 (59)

On the 9th June, the stitches were taken out of my arms and on the 10th. I dressed and got up. The same afternoon the King and Queen came to visit the hospital. The King was very interested in flying and talked for a

long time with the officers in the ward. I felt very dizzy and faint with standing up, and the Queen, seeing it, came back and told me not to get up for them!!!

Page 63 (61)

In September I went down to Gosport and had a flight in an Avro. I found the wooden hand would work the throttle all right and got a chit from Major Smith Barry to that effect. This chit was very useful as in November it influenced my medical board, who passed me fit to for home service flying. On informing the gilded staff at the Air Ministry of this, they were all very disdainful – told me I was mad etc. but allowed me to see if I could fly and posted me to No.10 Training Squadron at Shawbury near Shrewsbury. I shared a room with Barton (known as Fussy or Angel face, on account of his extreme youth). He had been wounded in his first scrap – the engine bearer being shot into his leg. It left a curious scar just like a ladder.

Page 68 (69)

He immediately flew away and crashed and killed himself in the mountains near Montgomery, so I and two other fellows had to go and make a report on his death. It was very cold and snow was on the ground when we arrived in our car. First we inspected the body, it was in an awful state. All the limbs sticking out cock-eye from the broken bones, and the face and neck, horribly cut. (That is the worst of a camel, the windscreen or guns always cut your throat, if you crash badly)

Page 71(73)

In the evenings, instructors from the Rumpy Squadron used to take their machines with passengers and shot gun, and taxi and fly low round the aerodrome shooting stray partridges, hares and pheasants.

This annoyed the owners of a shoot nearby (munitions makers from Coventry) who sent a rude message to the C.O and got it stopped. They also informed us that we were not to fly over them while they were shooting. That did it! On their next shoot, machines flew 50 feet over

their heads at intervals of 10 minutes all day, they did not get a good bag, but did not complain.

Page 79 (83 and 84)

On landing, Sgt Stratton came out and said, "Mr Grant has just killed himself, sir, behind the hanger". I went and had a look. The poor chap had half-rolled too low and dived into the ground – it was a mess. At any rate he hadn't felt much as amongst other fatal wounds, he had had a longeron driven straight through him. Next day I was horrified to see Grant's engine brought into my hanger. There were still bits of him sticking to it. So considering this unlucky and bad for the morale of self and pupils, I ordered the beastly thing out.

Page 87 (91 and 92)

I decided to escort Corny's and Dug's train, which I did for about 20 miles. This was a new game and a very enjoyable one. I flew at 2 feet most of the way and as the train was an express could keep fairly level with it. Corny and Dug looked out of the windows, and so did most of the other passengers. It felt very curious flying along a level with the train and only about 30 yards from it – seeing the expressions on the passenger's faces. The engine driver was most awfully pleased and kept tooting his whistle, a noise I could hear above the roar of the engine.

Page 90 (95)

I worked pretty hard for the next week, with only two exciting incidents. The first was: - a mechanic called Walker put his hand into the propeller as I was running my engine up. It made quite a jolt and knocked his little finger about 20 yards. Walker, like me, looked at his hand in a horrified way, turned round walked away and collapsed. I was sorry but interested.

Page 95 (100)

On Armistice day, everybody went mad. Half an hour after it was announced, you could hardly move in the streets, and what with the

church bells and cheers, could hardly hear. I noticed, however that the people who cheered loudest were the munitioneers and boys about to be called up.

Page 106/107 (109/110)

Then doing about 100m.p.h my left wing suddenly drops and the machine springs to the left. I think "That's the hell of a lump", and push the stick to the right, but I can't even get it centred, at the same time it waggles violently in my hand. The wing drops further to the vertical and in a panic I look along it – the top aileron has broken loose and is flapping about. Behind it are the hangers and the white dots of the men's faces on the ground. Terrified, I say to myself "God, I'm done this time". The stick is still wagging and I push it hard with my knee, get my left arm around the spade grip and pull like hell, at the same time throttling down and pulling out of the dive. The wing comes up slowly till it is only about 45 degrees down. There it sticks – so in great trepidation and watching the aileron to see that it doesn't come off, I straighten up as far as I can and as I am still tilted to the left, land.

We have a look at the ailerons – one hinge is broken and the other brakes as it is being taken off. This sort of thing gives me cold shivers inside.

The actual broken hinge (hammered straight to put into book) is attached to page 110 of the diary.

Page 112 (112 and 113)

Hours flown

Dual (with instructors)	About 25
Solo, overseas and instructing	700
Gosport, Sawmd, Reading	125
Joy riding, as passenger	<u>50</u>
	900
Hours over the lines	31

Crashes

March 17, 1917	BE2C	Crashed and burnt while night flying
April 27, 1917	Bristol Scout	Crashed under carriage and propeller while landing
March 17, 1918	Avro D5	Under carriage and propeller, while landing on a turn
March 27, 1918	Avro D6	Propeller and right bottom plane, by running into forward tender on the ground

Greatest height flown at
Lowest height flown at

21,100 = 4 miles 20 yards.
2 ft above Mersey and Solent

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SKJ Obituary aged 64 in the A.T.A. Association News Letter in 1956.

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