

Photographs from the CCI Archive

39 (HOME DEFENCE) SQUADRON 1916–1917



Above : The BE2c was the main type operated 1916-mid 1917 and achieved success in the HD role, with Leefe Robinson, Sowrey and Tempest shooting down airships and Brandon aiding in the destruction of a fourth.

These photographs were taken at Sutton's Farm, the base for the unit's B Flight, and this one shows a BE2c that had been adapted for HD duty.

Although there are no underwing brackets for Holt's flares that assisted landing, there is a chute for the launching of RL parachute flares positioned for use by the pilot. That suggests that the machine was flown as a single-seater, an idea borne out by the fact that there is no armament for the observer but a bracket for an upward firing Lewis gun, for pilot use, with a pannier for Lewis gun ammunition drums alongside the rear cockpit. Tubes for Le Prieur rockets were mounted on the outer starboard interplane struts.

Below : Smaller numbers of BE12s supplemented the BE2cs of the squadron and 6547 was photographed after being overturned on the aerodrome. It showed no evidence of any fittings associated with night work, but was armed with the usual Vickers gun. The serial number appears to have been marked in a colour, not in black. This machine had a long career. It was delivered to 19 Sqn at Filton and went to the BEF with that unit. It was crashed three times, the last on 14 September 1916 sufficient to warrant its return to 2 AD. It was sent, crated, to England on 30 September and issued to 39 (HD) Sqn after reconstruction. This mishap cannot have been too serious because it was re-allotted to the BEF and went, via St-Omer, to the Special Duty Flight on 8 April 1917. Lt C.A.S. Bean managed to again overturn it on 12 July but it was repaired. Bean was made POW on this machine, while engaged in night bombing on 9 August. It was captured intact and given German markings.

