



Atlas deutscher und ausländischer Seeflugzeuge.

THE FBA D6 FLYING BOAT

Compiled by Paul Leaman

ON 23 OCTOBER 1916 three French naval FBA Type H flying boats¹ from Dunkirk were attacked by two German seaplanes from Zeebrugge. These were Rumpler 6B1 number 751 flown by Lt n sur Zee Nieumeyer and Friedrichshafen FF33h number 820 flown by Oberflugmeister Karl Meyer² with Flugmaat Karl Elasser as his observer. One of the French aircraft, FBA H number 332 carrying the unit marking D.11 on its hull front, was forced to land on the water and was later towed into the Zeebrugge base. Its crew Robin Guyot d'Asnire de Salins, the pilot and his observer Sgt Medeville were taken prisoner. The flying boat carrying the unit number D.11 was recovered and later displayed at the *Deutsche Luftsikriegbeute Austellung* (Delag) in Munich in 1918. Immediately after capture it had its French national markings overpainted with German Eiserness Kreuz markings. It is said that its French markings were reinstated before it was put on display but this is not apparent in the available photographs of that event.

The early FBA flying boats were based on designs made by Francois Denhaut³ for the Donnet-Lévêque⁴ company and all were small single-engine pusher biplane machines. FBA D6 followed this pattern but was distinguished from them by its finless, rounded rudder mounted above its tailplane⁵ – it was also larger and heavier than the earlier types. FBA D.6 aircraft built for French service were mostly powered by a 150hp Hispano-Suiza 8Aa in-line water cooled engine but those used by other countries had a variety of different

engines.⁶ The FBA D.6 was a two bay unequal span biplane with its small lower wing mounted just above its fuselage on four supporting struts. The wings, tail plane and rudder were all fabric covered on conventional wooden frames. There was no stagger between the wings and its greater span upper wing was mounted on parallel interplane struts with additional outward leaning pairs supporting the resulting overhanging plane on each side. Only the top wing was fitted with ailerons. Its single pusher engine was mounted on struts just below the upper wing above and behind the pilot's position.⁷ The trailing edge of the upper wing's centre-section was cut away to allow clearance for the propeller. The hull divided, into separate compartments, was of rectangular cross section, flat bottomed and with a single step. It was 3-plywood covered and built on a structure of ash longerons and other members. A pair of flat-bottomed floats were positioned beneath the outer struts on the lower wing providing stability when on the water.

The D.6 had a crew of three – its pilot and an observer sitting side by side in the main cockpit and a gunner in the front position. It was armed with a single 0.303 in calibre Lewis gun on a mounting in the nose cockpit and could carry a 440lb load of bombs on a pair of racks positioned under the lower wing and close to the fuselage.

Compact and well-built as they were, the FBA D.6 flying boats were no match for their faster and better armed German opponents and a number were in fact brought down and captured as a result.

A French FBA Type C flying boat, serial number 58, with the identifying '3' on its fuselage nose in German hands at Zeebrugge.

:CCI via Bill Evans

