

# 36 SQUADRON REVISITED

BY MICK DAVIS



*A view across Hylton aerodrome.*

Since my history of this squadron was published in CCI 49/1, further information has come to light concerning the HD flight at Cramlington from which 36 Squadron was formed. Examination of the officer records held in TNA AIR76 indicates that the pilots initially sent to Cramlington were drawn from 25 Squadron Montrose and regarded as a detachment of that unit. When 25 Sqn moved south to Thetford at the start of January 1916, the Cramlington flight then came under 6 RAS Montrose (6 RS from 6 .1.1916). Lt R. Blatherwick, for example, joined Montrose on 24.7.1915, was noted as being with 25 Sqn (1915) then 6 RAS from 2.1.1916. Similarly, Lt W.B. Ellis, after being on the books of both 25 Sqn and 18 RAS at Montrose, joined 6 RAS and Cramlington on 5.1.1916, while Abercromby, the CO, was noted on Montrose's strength from 16.9.1915 then 6 RAS from 2.1.1916. The Capt A. Wilson was almost certainly Alexander Morice Wilson, who was posted to Montrose on 3.8.1915 then 6 RAS on 24.11.1915. Although not an original member, the record for Lt J. Nichol notes him with 6 RS from 10.2.1916 'for detachment at Cramlington'.

As noted in a subsequent issue of 'Fabric', it has now been established that the HD flight was operated from a site to the SE of the later aerodrome. A site plan of that original landing ground was provided, and it is shown in two of the accompanying photographs.

I recently acquired the medals, albums and assorted memorabilia that had belonged to Captain J.C. Griffiths, who took over command of 36 Sqn B Flt at Hylton on 5 May 1917.

His time in charge of the flight covered the transition from flying BE variants to FE2bs. Re-equipment with FE2bs was complete by August 1917 and Griffiths' albums show three incidents involving BEs – two BE2es and a BE12. There are no Casualty Cards for 36 Sqn in the period May-August 1917 and so it has to be assumed that pilots walked away from the incidents shown. The BE12 photographs most probably show the machine crashed on 24 May by Lt P. Thompson, killing several civilians, and thought to be 6163. Not noted in the original article was the fact that Thompson was quickly posted out; he joined 37 Sqn on 13 June then spent time with 61 and 39 Sqn, still on Home Defence, before a posting to 22 Sqn as a flight commander on 17.3.1918 and death in action five days later.

The most intriguing image in the Clifford albums is that of a Vickers FB.14 at Hylton, with the local pub, The Three Horseshoes in the background. The only FB.14s noted as with the HD Group up to early June 1916 were A678 and A686 which were with 51 Sqn at Marham, both were in plain natural fabric colouring, not with PC10 upper surfaces as shown here. It has to be assumed that the FB.14 was issued to 36 Sqn sometime in June or July 1917. It may have been either A726 or A727, both of which were allotted to HD duty, with a request for the cancellation of that allotment being made on 21 June.

A pair of images in the Clifford albums show Sopwith Pup B5906, probably taken during his time as OC 191 NTS. One has it marked with the individual number 5 and the name Impikoff, another with individual number and carrying the name Ikanopit. The latter must show the machine's appearance when with 36 Sqn A Flt at Hylton in 1918. Certainly, Lt E.T. Carpenter recorded B5906 as such on 5.9.1918 but he also recorded a Pup flown on 29.10.1918 simply as Ikanopit.

*Two views of the original Cramlington landing ground, taken by Lt W.B. Ellis in January 1916, using a pistol camera. Four RAF hangars had been erected for the HD flight's BE2cs, one of which can be seen. The field of ridge and furrow to the south of the site was occupied by two long huts which, presumably, were used to accommodate the flight's personnel.*

*:TNA AIR1/128/15/40/175*

