

A FRENCH COLLECTION

photographs via Eric Harlin
captions by Steve Suddaby



Above: A captured Rumpler C.I., 1850/15. The officer at the right looks very much like Capitaine Maurice Happe, French bombing pioneer and commander of Escadrille MF.29 and Groupe de Bombardement 4. The Rumpler appears to have been brought down intact and is shown on an aerodrome with Nieuport 11s in the background.

Left: Happe, with his distinctive beard, is the officer shown in casual pose. For more on Happe, see CCI 44/4.

The SPAD S.XII was an experiment with cannon-mounted aircraft. It carried a 37mm S.A.M.C. cannon that fired through the propeller. This one displays the Stork insignia of Escadrille SPA.3 and may be Capt Georges Guynemer's plane since he was known to have flown one starting in July 1917. No escadrille was entirely equipped with these; they were parcelled out to top fighter pilots, including René Fonck and Guynemer. They did have some success with them but were cumbersome to use. Major Charles Biddle, USAS, wrote about it to this writer in 1969: I never used mine in action but I did practice with it... There was nothing difficult about reloading but it was slow as one had to reach into a rack alongside of the pilot's seat, take out a shell, insert it in the breach and close it, all of which took several seconds. I never noticed any feeling of nausea from the exhaust gases. The weight did cut down on the plane's performance but not very much. The plane had a yoke control and not a stick, so that the breach of the gun recoiled between one's legs and ejected the empty shell automatically... Because of the weight factor, we only carried about four cartridges.

