

Hauptmann Heydemarck & Captain Saunders

by Mike Kelsey

HAUPTMANN GEORG HEYDEMARCK wrote three books about his experiences in the German Air Service during the First World War. The first two, *Double Decker C.666* and *Flying Section 17* are concerned with his time on the Western Front. The subject of the third book is evident from the title – *War Flying in Macedonia*. This is actually a rather loose translation of the original German title, *Feldflieger über Mazedonien*. The book was published in Germany in 1933 and the first English edition came out in 1935.¹

Leutnant von Eschwege

Heydemarck joined *Fliegerabteilung 30* on the Macedonian front at around the end of 1916. He initially spent a brief period based at Hudova, in occupied Serbia, and this is covered in Chapter I of his book. Then, in mid-February 1917, he was appointed to command the detached element (or 'Vorkommando') of FA30 based at Drama in Greece. At the time this detachment was equipped with three reconnaissance machines and one scout. The scout aircraft was flown by Ltn Rudolf von Eschwege, who had already been credited with four aerial victories by the time that Heydemarck arrived at Drama. Indeed, despite not being a member of a fighter squadron (*Jagdstaffel*), von Eschwege became the most successful German fighter pilot on the Macedonian front. When Heydemarck left Drama in September 1917, to take up a staff post, von Eschwege had raised his score to 15 confirmed victories and his eventual tally was 20. These successes were achieved largely at the expense of RNAS units operating in the Aegean area, and of 17 Squadron RFC on the Struma River front. As is well known, von Eschwege was killed on 21 November 1917 when he attacked a British kite balloon that had been rigged with explosives in anticipation of just such an attack.²

War Flying in Macedonia can be viewed as primarily a paean of praise for von Eschwege as, not surprisingly, a great deal of

the book is devoted to his exploits. Nonetheless, there is much else of interest, including observations on flying conditions in Macedonia, the effect of the climate, bombing raids conducted by both sides and details of the techniques used by Heydemarck when interrogating captured British airmen. A number of British pilots are named in the book – mainly casualties or prisoners of war, the only exceptions being Capt G.W. Murlis Green and Lt W.S. Scott, both of 17 Squadron RFC. In 1917 Murlis Green was the most successful British pilot on the Macedonian front, in terms of aerial victories, whilst Lt Scott had twice succeeded in landing agents behind enemy lines.

The Other Side of the Hill

There are a couple of passages in *War Flying in Macedonia* which, on the face of it, appear to indicate that Heydemarck had access to British official records after the war. For example, on p21 where he refers to *The English report on the operations of the 16th Wing*.³ However, Heydemarck also makes mention of H. Collinson Owen's book *Salonika and After* published in 1919, and indeed he quotes from it on a number of occasions. Appendix I of *Salonika and After* is entitled 'The Work of the 16th Wing, Royal Air Force'. This appears as a continuous narrative, but is actually made up of a series of small excerpts from a history of the Wing compiled by the RAF at the end of the war.⁴ In fact, all of Heydemarck's information apparently derived from British records or sources can be found in Appendix I of *Salonika and After*. This includes the mention of Lt Scott's agent-dropping activities, something which Heydemarck evidently only became aware of on reading H. Collinson Owen's book.⁵

Murlis Green, however, was known to the Germans during the war because of his successes in aerial combat. For example,

Right: Sanke card No.549, showing von Eschwege.

Below: Ltn Rudolph von Eschwege, 'the Eagle of the Aegean', seated in a staff car with a Roland D.II in the background.

:CCI Archive

