

JOSEPH FRANK HIGGINS

70 & 49 SQUADRONS RAF

by Paul Leaman

Some time ago, I was loaned a photograph album and notes from a logbook that had been created by Frank Joseph Higgins of, first, 70 and then 49 Squadrons RAF. These items had, in turn, been loaned to Rod Millward by Frank Higgins' brother, Brian. Rod, who now lives and works in the USA, had known the Higgins family (including Frank), first as a child and then later in life.

The album contained a large number of photographs, some of aeroplanes and others of people taken both before and after WWI. While not all of the photographs were suitable for us to copy and use – poor quality or of non WWI related subjects – there was sufficient there to tempt me to put other things to one side and to search the files at the National Archives to see what existed regarding the man himself. What follows is what I was able to find. Our thanks to Rod for the album loan that made this article possible and to Stuart Leslie for his help with the photographs.

FRANK HIGGINS, who received the Army number 554195 was born on 30 November 1898 and his home address was 54 Burghill Road, Sydenham, London SE26. He was never known as Joseph or Joe. His next of kin was given as H.J. Higgins. The records also had two more, probably post 1919, addresses for Frank. They were *Glengarry*, 2 Westbury Road, Penge, London SE20 and 19 Hawke Road, Norwood, London, SE19.

On 22 August 1917, aged 18 years, he reported for military service in Hastings, Sussex. Next day he was sent on to the Officer Cadet Wing at Denham in Buckinghamshire.

On 5 October 1917 he was posted to 2 School of Military Aeronautics at Oxford.

Frank Higgins in front of a 62 TS Sopwith Pup at Dover on 11 March 1918. The Pup had a white/blue/white rear fuselage band and its cowling was also, probably, blue. The wheel discs were painted in two colours and, although apparently unarmed, the machine had a Sopwith padded windscreen.



On 28 November 1917 he was posted to 1 Training Depot Station, one of the first such training units, based at Stamford (later re-named Wittering), in Lincolnshire. Its equipment, at that time, comprised, mainly, DH6s, Curtiss JN4s and BE2es.

Official records state that Frank was then posted to 62 Training Squadron at Dover on 26 January 1918, but his diary gives the date as the 28th. 62 TS was a higher Training Squadron, dedicated to training scout pilots and equipped with Avro 504s, Sopwith Pups and Sopwith Camels. He graduated as a pilot on 2 April 1918 and, nine days later, was posted to 1 School of Aerial Fighting at Ayr, a posting that lasted only three days.

On 17 April, Frank embarked for France and, on 18 April, was with the Pilot's Pool of No 2 Aeroplane Supply Depot at Rang-du-Fliers. On 24/25 April he was posted to 70 Sqn, operating



Sopwith Pup C3501 photographed at Dover on 11 March 1918 and possibly the machine shown in the previous photograph. The Pup had been constructed from spares/salvage by the 6th Wing ARS, also based at Dover.



Above: A somewhat fuzzy view of Avro 504J D54, a 62 TS machine that was transferred to the French government.

Below: A Camel that was crashed at Dover on 9 March 1918.

