



'IN FLIGHT'

2Lt Ernest John WATKINS

**His Notes and Photographs while serving with
B Flight, 7 Squadron RFC May 1916- May 1917**

Narrative by S.K. Taylor

Illustrations courtesy of E.J. 'Ted' Watkins (son)

EVEN AT 3000FT IN A VERY SLIGHT WIND, just above breeze level and with the 90hp RAF1a engine of BE2d 5878 throttled right down, human voice communication between the pilot and observer, especially one with a thicker than normal accent – B Flight of 7 Squadron RFC, in October 1916 had a few of those – was out of the question. In order to partially overcome this, the flight's aircrew, and this also extended to A and C Flights as well, were issued with small 'dictation pads' and, with each, an indelible, non-smearing pencil. 2Lt Ernest John Watkins, a B Flight pilot, kept his 'in flight' notes and they make for some interesting reading. Most of the following were directed to Lt E.P. Ranger, Lt F.A. Prescott, Cpl Shaw, Lt W. Davies or Lt R. Stephenson.

We can work this chap as quickly as you like now.
Two more OK's right in the trench.
Try and spot some flashes - there are a hell of a lot going on.
Shut the throttle and I will too.
They have just put out 'T' so let us depart!!!
Your one and a half hours will be up in five minutes.
Note: Six of bumf due to shortage of same.
Are you sure they are Huns because of this bomb load had not been a dud one - have got him about ten yards short.
I am going to send down a whole list of flashes.
Another bag to be dropped at USNA then home.
Let us have one good look at the damage and then C1.
Bum around for a few minutes and I will send some flashes to 'M'.

I think we had better go in now. Don't you? It is 10.30.
Your remark is justified sir.
Some barrage!
I have told him to GO.
They aren't ready yet had a ▲ out.
We will go and call them up in five minutes
(3 September 1916 contact).
How high are the clouds?
Abbeville and the Forest of Crecy.
Yes, what about a bit of lunch. They've been plastering that poor devil; damned good shooting too.
Have you dropped your bombs yet sir?
Pilkington is doing a shoot close by us. It was his OK.
(25 August 1916 art obs).
Let us go home via St Pol and Doullens.
Prior put the 'wind up' those three Uhlans with his gun. I did not see his bombs explode.
Wait until I call them up.
You had better finish your shoot.
Go to the other side of Houquet. The sun is in their eyes.
(3 September 1916 contact).
I am going to give fire for effort. Will you bum around so that I can give general corrections.
One and a quarter hours to make up three. Left aero at 12.00. It is now 1.45.
Back up hack. I want to ring up the battery. We may take to the air again afterwards.
Note: There were several other 'in flight' notes too indiscernible to read, most of them scribbled by the observers to 2Lt Watkins.

A 19 Sqn RE7, not one flown by E.J. Watkins but exemplifying the problems suffered with the type.

:CCI Archive

