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**Cross & Cockade International**  
The First World War Aviation Historical Society

## Wind in the Wires

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter from **Cross & Cockade International**, bringing you all that's new and interesting in the world of WW1 aviation.



Sopwith's Camel.

This lovely painting of a pair of Sopwith LCTs (1.5 Strutters to most of us!) is on the cover of the next journal - due out in a week or two.

Articles include another rivetting yarn from Stewart Taylor. This time his subject is Capt Jimmy Glen, of Naval 3 and elsewhere.

James Templer lays out the birth of British military aviation, and Mick Davies continues his long running series on flying sites in the UK and Ireland. Plus we have a fascinating study on the enigmatic and controversial Herbert Smith; designer of



## **IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!**

The main recent news item relating to WW1 aviation, and one that has been exercising the minds of the boffins at CCI and elsewhere over the last few weeks, concerned the posting of an article in the *Athens News* in early May. It detailed the discovery of aircraft wreckage in February of this year on the Greek island of Thassos. The wreckage had been seen close to the summit of Profitis Ilias, a mountain peak in the centre of the island, in the Northern Aegean Sea. Members of the Hellenic Team of Aviation Historical Research (Kerykeion) were invited to investigate the large number of metallic parts on the surface of the soil and also buried in earth and bushes in the immediate vicinity of the crash site. They also located the exact spot where the plane impacted the ground, a depression containing parts from what was initially presumed to be the engine and front section of a Nieuport 11 biplane.

This led to speculation, as reported in the article, that the plane was Nieuport 11



## **OLD GUY AND A BUCKET OF SHRIMPS**

*24 April 2012: Casper Journal:*

A lovely article was recently posted by the Chairman Emeritus of the Wyoming Veterans' Commission recounting a routine that an old man in Florida, called Ed, had almost every Friday. He brought a bucket of shrimp to his favorite pier. Seagulls would come screeching and squawking and dozens would envelope him. He would stand there tossing shrimp to the hungry birds. As he did, he would say with a smile, "Thank you. Thank you." When the bucket was empty, Ed would leave and wend his way home in deep thought, as if in another time and place. Ed was none other than Eddie Rickenbacker, the World War 1 flying ace.

The background to the story relates to an incident in World War 2, when Eddie was a passenger in a B-17D Flying Fortress, which ditched in a remote part of the Central Pacific Ocean. Eddie and his

serial 3983 of Flight Lieutenant Peberdy, based at Prinos (the RNAS base on Thassos) and reported missing in action in January 1917. However, further examination of photos of the parts so far recovered, by CCI members Mick Davies, Trevor Foreman and Andy Kemp, has now confirmed beyond doubt that these are from a Sopwith F.1 Camel, not a Nieuport. This discounts the possibility that the pilot was Peberdy, as the Camel came into service with the RNAS months after he was reported missing in action.

Identification of the aircraft and pilot involved has proved tricky. There's no matching loss in British records. Greek records are incomplete, and those that survive are of dubious accuracy. One possibility is that the remains are from an incident on 2nd December 1917, when three Greek airmen were killed in a collision near Prinos. Surviving Geek records say that the three were in two Bristol Scouts - which is pretty unlikely. One hope is that further work will locate a manufacturer's plate, or the engine allegedly recovered by a shepherd in the 1980s.

colleagues drifted for 24 days in three life rafts lashed together and on the eighth day, a seagull landed on Eddie's head. He slowly and carefully captured it, divided it judiciously to all, and the organs were used for fishing bait. An occasional fish helped sustain them during their ordeal.



## **LIGHTER THAN AIR, AND MADE FROM COWS**

If you missed it, just a note to direct you to the BBC iplayer to catch up while you can on the episode of Coast broadcast on BBC Two on 27 May 2012. The programme, "The Hidden History of Harbours" includes a piece from the ship-building town of Barrow-in-Furness with mustachioed correspondent Dick Strawbridge exploring a forgotten top secret project involving the building of an airship, namely the construction and loss of Her Majesty's Airship No 1.

[The Hidden History of Harbours](#)

Watch out for an appearance by the Airship Heritage Trust's Dr Giles Camplin



## JAY LENO

Whilst hunting for news items, your correspondent came across reports concerning the American stand-up comedian and TV host, Jay Leno, who boasts a legendary collection of cars. He was recently spotted in public driving his 1917 Fiat Botafogo Special, which has a “monstrous” 22-litre WW1 aircraft engine lying underneath. The reports explain that the engine is extremely low revving, requiring an upshift at around 1,500 rpm, due to its amazing torque output (whatever that means!). Search for “fiat botafogo special”.



*The fabric from one of Manfred von Richthofen's fighter planes is one of only a handful of documented Red Baron items known to exist*

(on the left) as he gives a practical demonstration of the science behind the internal gasbags (or ballonets), which held the hydrogen for rigid airships. Goldbeater’s skin, being the prepared outer membrane of the large intestine of the cow or ox, was the favoured material to ensure gas-tightness. The sheets were joined together and folded into impermeable layers. Giles attended May’s CCI London meeting, minus cow guts!

## TV GOSSIP

I was having a pint with Tony, a British military small arms ammunition expert, the other day. He has recently been filming in Great Yarmouth with broadcaster / writer / historian Tessa Dunlop for next year’s series of Coast. The show is reporting on the January 1915 Zeppelin Raid on the seaside town.



## **RED BARON FABRIC TO BE AUCTIONED**

A rare section of aircraft fabric taken from a plane flown by our old friend, Manfred von Richthofen was recently part of an online auction by New Hampshire auction house, RR Auction. The lacquered fabric has the “Balkankreuz” insignia painted on it in black, against a green background, and measures 32-by-19 1/2 inches. The auctioneers said it was likely taken from the rudder area of the aircraft.

The artifact comes via the estate of United States Air Force Col. Kimbrough Brown, author of the book, “Von Richthofen and the Flying Circus” in the 1950s. It was presented to Brown directly from the von Richthofen family in gratitude of his book. The item was expected to fetch about \$100,000.



## **BOMBING SURVIVOR DIES AT THE AGE OF 96**

## **WATERBIRD FLIES AGAIN**

*The Mail Online* reported on 27 May 2012 that “Winston Churchill’s pre-WW1 seaplane” is set to take to the skies for the first time in over 100 years. The plane, Waterbird, made its maiden flight in November 1911, with Churchill joining creator Edward Wakefield behind the controls.

A replica of the seaplane is being built with the intention of making tourist flights on Lake Windmere in the Lake District – only if the Government lift the 10mph speed limit on the lake!

Waterbird paved the way for later aircraft which were used for reconnaissance flights during World War I and the eventual formation of the Royal Navy’s Fleet Air Arm.

See also [Waterbird Project](#) - a very interesting website and [Waterbird Film](#), which contains a short film on the part rebuild of Waterbird.

*From the East Anglia Daily Press on 13 April 2012:*

The EADP carried a report announcing the death of a woman thought to be the last survivor of the Zeppelin raid on the Suffolk town of Woodbridge. Ellen “Rene” Harper was one of three siblings orphaned when their parents, Roger and Dora Tyler, were killed during a Zeppelin raid in August 1915. Mrs Harper was just five weeks old at the time of the raid.



## AND FINALLY .....

Planning your summer holidays?

Here's a little something from my collection – postally used on 1 September 1916 – recommending Blackpool.

Written by David Marks, edited by Andy Kemp  
[forward to a friend](#)

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