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Somme Success: The Royal Flying Corps And The Battle Of The Somme 1916



Synopsis

High above the blood soaked trenches of the Somme during the Summer and Autumn of 1916, the Royal Flying Corps were acting out - and winning - one of the first great aerial battles of history. Even in those pioneering days of flying, primitive aircraft flown by brave young men were of significant military value. Before the battle, photographic reconnaissance aircraft from both sides were desperately trying to map the opposition's deployment. Artillery spotting aircraft were proving invaluable in directing devastating fire onto otherwise hidden targets. Bombing raids became a normal routine. Somme Success is a highly effective description of all facets of air operations of the period. It uses the voices and accounts of those who were there. It describes how the RFC met the Fokker scourge head on using DH2 single seaters and, later, the ubiquitous FE2B two seaters, of the type that German 'Ace' Max Immelmann was shot down by. Having conceded air supremacy to the RFC early in the offensive, the German Air Service launched an aerial counter attack during August and September. The elite scout squadron led by Oswald Boelcke raised the stakes and their Albatross single seaters proved superior to any allied aircraft. Richthofen then appeared on the scene and a new period of German supremacy began. This is a thrilling account of the dramatic events of the period and an insight into the 'glamorous' world of the Great Aces.

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Customer Reviews

Another excellent Peter Hart WW 1 book. When I received it I was concerned That it wasn't as thick as "Bloody April", it's a little over 200 pages but is very well done on high quality paper. The strength of Hart's books to me are the many primary source accounts included. There are many excellent photos spread throughout the book unlike "Bloody April where they are all concentrated in one section.

This is one of several books by Peter Hart on the role of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in the First World War. It is extremely well written, and uses a wide variety of first-person accounts to reveal both the British and German perspectives on the real nature of early air combat, and the role it played in the overall strategy of the Western Front in 1916. Much more than aces and fighter vs. fighter combat, this book looks at the vital role played by reconnaissance, artillery observation and photographic planes in planning and carrying out one of the great battles of the war. A must read for anyone interested in the Great War in the air.

This is the definitive work on the air war supporting the Battle of the Somme in France 1916. Peter Hart, a respected historical scholar of World War I aviation, has written a magnificent volume, meticulously relating the story of the pilots of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to their German opponents, their French allies and the war on the ground. He highlights the roles of Albert Ball, Max Immelman and Oswald Boelcke in their contribution to the infant profession and tactics of aerial combat. A must read for any World War I enthusiast or historian. RG Head Brigadier General, USAF (Retired)

I found this book very interesting as it came from a different perspective to most other books on the Somme offensive that I have or have read. It was an insight into the very early days of flight and the exceptionally quick development of aircraft that would not have taken place except for the war. The rate of development would have been much slower, but was driven by necessity - from both sides. I would recommend it as an alternative read to the proliferation of material on the ground war.

As are all of Peter Hart's works, this is a wonderful history of air combat on the Western Front. Hart, as always, makes heavy use of anecdotes to tell his story. It is heavily weighted toward the British side but, after all, Hart, works at the Imperial War Museum and that is where he finds most of his raw material. My only gripe (and it is a frequent gripe with) is that they make this book appear to be a new publication when, in fact, it was first published many years ago. , on this web site, gives only the most recent printing date, not the original copyright date. Still, I hadn't read it and it was new to me if not the rest of the world.

Hart's book on the air war in the early days of WWI is an excellent precursor to his other two books on the subject BLOODY APPRIL and TRENCHES FALLING. His writing style incorporates writings and unit reports of both the British and German airmen who fought for control of the skies over the Somme battlefield. Anyone interested in aviation warfare will. Want to read this to see how far military aviation came from its inception to the massive fire raids of WWII. No B-29's here only planes of cloth and wire. One will come away with a deep respect for military personnel who fight under horrible conditions in the name of their countries.

Good read. The stories of early flight are as much fun as those about the Napoleonic wars.

This is a clearly written book describing air combat over the Western Front in 1916 during the battle of the Somme. The text includes both British and German combat reports, sometimes of the same episode. Recommended as are other WWI books by the author.

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