



Major v. Richthofen at Courtrai Hospital with his famous son, Manfred.

Disliking life close to the trenches, Richthofen looked for a more meaningful occupation. At this time, he really didn't know which planes fought for Germany and which ones fought for the Allies. However, he did know that it was the aircraft, not the cavalry, that now carried out the reconnaissance missions. Yet, becoming a pilot took months of training, probably longer than the war would last. So instead of flight school, Richthofen requested to be transferred to the Air Service to become an observer. In May 1915, Richthofen travelled to Cologne to undertake the observer training program at the No. 7 Air Replacement Station.

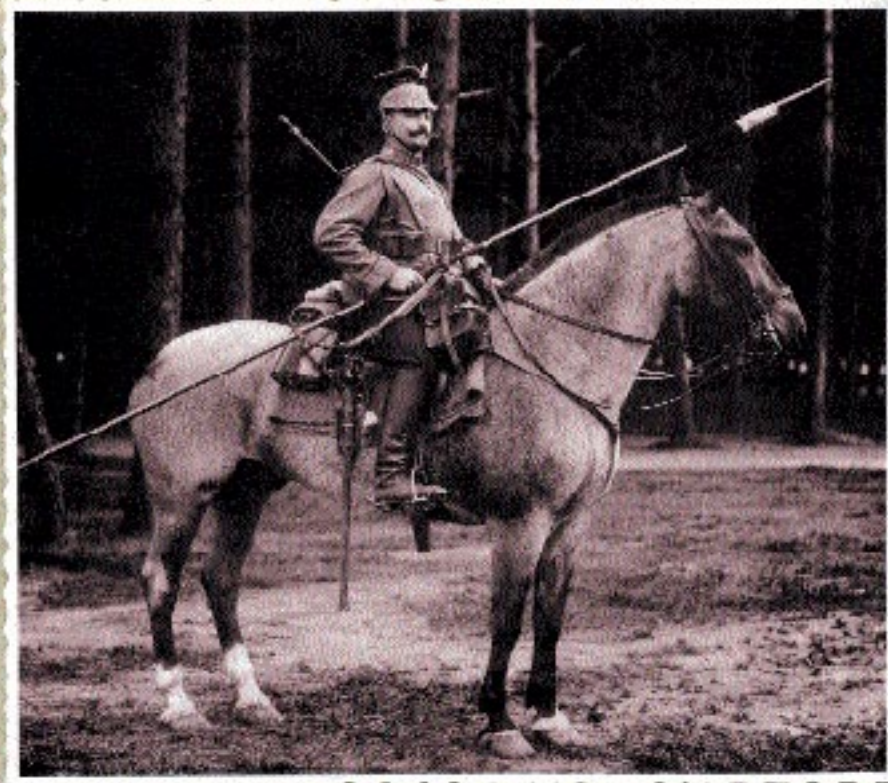
Although Richthofen didn't have to fly the airplane, he still had to go up in them.

'At seven o'clock the next morning, I was to fly for the first time as an observer. Naturally, I was very excited, because I could not imagine what it would be like. Everyone I asked told me something different. The night before, I had gone to bed earlier than usual to be fresh for the great moment next morning. We drove to the airfield and I sat in an airplane for the first time. The blast of wind from the propeller disturbed me greatly. It was impossible to make myself heard by the pilot. Everything flew away from me. If I took a piece of paper out, it disappeared. My flying helmet slipped off, my muffler loosened too much, and my jacket was not buttoned securely – in short, I was miserable. Before I

already a Lieutenant (lieutenant), Manfred was posted to Militsch (now Milicz, Poland).

When the war began in the Summer of 1914, Manfred von Richthofen was 22 years old and stationed on Germany's eastern border, but was soon transferred to the west. Manfred's cavalry regiment, the 'Uhlanen-Regt. Kaiser Alexander III. Von Russland (westpreussisches) Nr 1', was attached to the infantry, for whom Manfred conducted reconnaissance patrols when the Germans entered Belgium and France.

However, when Germany's advance was halted outside Paris and both sides dug in, there were few requirements for cavalry already doomed to extinction in a new era presided over by machines. Indeed, cavalrymen could do little in the trenches and Manfred was transferred to the Signal Corps where he laid telephone wires and delivered dispatches.



A fine study of a Uhlán cavalryman, probably posed for a recruiting poster.



The observer's badge; one of the few military awards he did not receive, as he never fulfilled the required

knew what was happening, the pilot got the engine up to full speed and the machine began rolling, faster and faster. I hung on frantically. Then the shaking stopped and we were in the air. The ground slipped away beneath us.

Richthofen was not really up to requirements during this first flight, losing his sense of location and thus being unable to give the pilot directions. However, despondency not being part of Richthofen's make-up, he continued to study and learn. He learnt how to map read, how to drop bombs, locate enemy positions or to draw diagrams while flying.

In due time, Richthofen was ready to act as an observer. His first assignment was on the Eastern Front to report enemy troop movements. After several months of flying as an observer in the East, Manfred was ordered to report to the 'Mail Pigeon Detachment', the code name for a new, secret unit intended to bomb England.

Richthofen's first air combat took place on September 1, 1915. He flew with Leutnant Georg Zeumer as pilot, and met an enemy aircraft in the air for the first time. Richthofen was armed with just a rifle (a common practice in those early days) and, although it can be



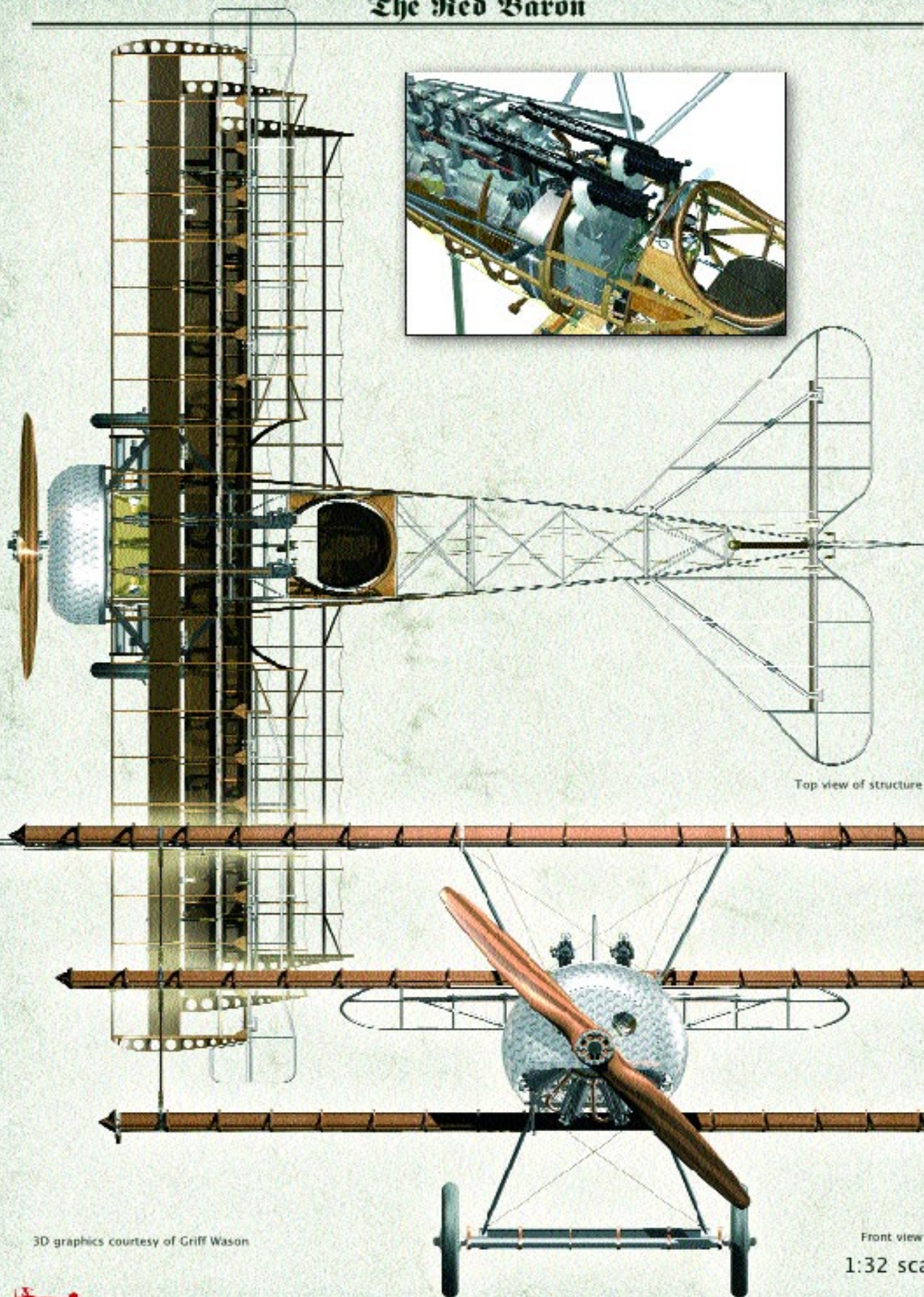
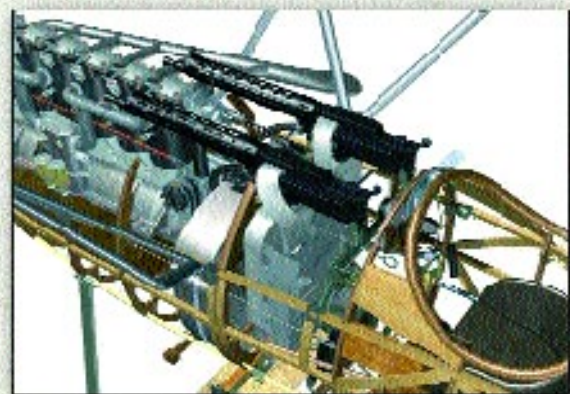
An early postcard illustrating the very beginning of the fighter air force.



Period postcard depicting the German ace Max Immelmann (1890–1916). He was the first combat pilot to be awarded the Order of Pour Le Merite, hence the nickname: 'Blue Max'.



The Red Baron

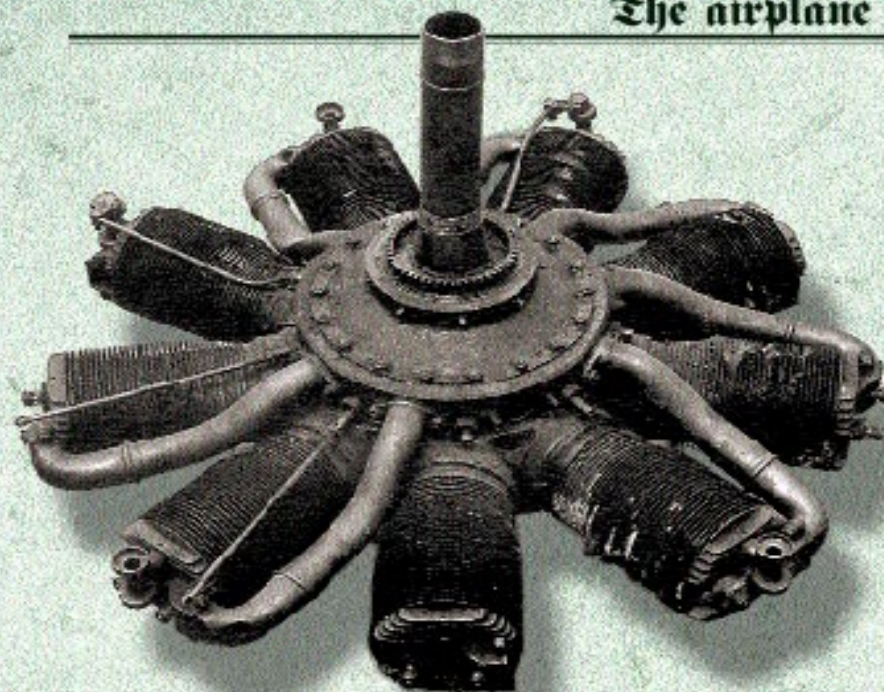


Top view of structure

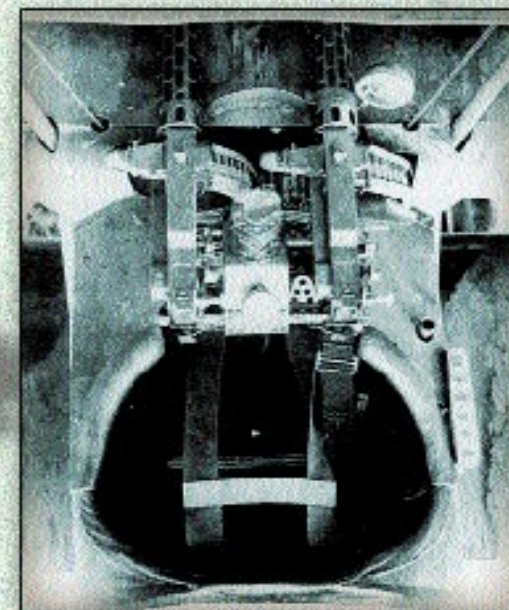
Front view
1:32 scale

3D graphics courtesy of Griff Wason

The airplane



The rear view of von Richthofen's Fokker Dr.1 engine. It was a 110hp Oberursel, No. 2478. This engine was, in fact, a copy of the French Le Rhone rotary engine.



An interesting upper view of an unidentified Dr.1. Note the twin gun installation with its distinctive ammunition belt.



Von Richthofen's Fokker Dr.1 control column. Note the two triggers marked 'L' and 'R', for firing the LMG 08/15 machine guns.



A modern replica of the control column.

Dr.1's main gauges in a modern replica.



Compass



Fuel gauge



RPM indicator



Watch



Altimeter

