

Hail The Intrepid Few!

*Southern Rhodesian-born Airmen in the Royal Flying
Corps and Royal Air Force during World War I
1916-1919*

By
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*Almost One-Hundred years- ago, during the First World War (1914-1919),
Rhodesian-born airmen were already to be found serving in the Royal Flying Corps
(R.F.C.)¹, and later the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.).*

Southern Rhodesia was but twenty-four years old when World War One commenced. It was a young nation; rugged, but promising! Yet just sixty years later She would be fated to become the basket- case that is today's Zimbabwe². However, even following the arrival of the Pioneer column in 1890, and the accompanying settlement of that vast country, it seems apparent that very few white children were born in Southern Rhodesia over the next decade³. That is why it is of particular interest to note that no-less than Seven Rhodesian-born men were to serve in the fledgling Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air-Force during World War One⁴. Not only were they to be found in the squadrons of the R.F.C. and R.A.F.⁵, but

¹ The forerunner of the Royal Air-Force, which amalgamated with the Royal Naval Air Service (R.N.A.S.) in April 1918, and was brought about under the auspices of the South African, General (Later Field Marshal) Jan Christian Smuts.

² Rhodesia gained so-called independence on the 17 April 1980 as Zimbabwe.

³ Only ninety-odd births relating to White Children having been recorded by 1902.

⁴ It must not be forgotten however, that over 6000 white men and women resident in Rhodesia and approximately 2800 Black Rhodesians (the latter predominantly in the Rhodesia Native Regiment), were to serve in the Allied forces during World War One, including the British Army; Royal Air Force; Royal Navy; the Indian Army; and the Rhodesian and South African Defence Forces, and would ultimately pay an enormous price in Human life. That would not stop Northern and Southern Rhodesia from again mobilizing their

considering Rhodesia was still very much in its infancy, it is absolutely astonishing that of those seven men: one would gain eight victories and become possibly the first Rhodesian-born air-ace; the other would fall to the guns of the “Red Baron”, and enter history as the last of Baron von Richthofen’s eighty victories, before the Baron’s own demise on the 21 April 1918, over Sailly-le Sec; another would later attain the title of Surgeon General of the South African Medical Corps (S.A.M.C.); and one would also help in pioneering aviation in Southern Rhodesia and southern Africa after the war.

The First Rhodesian-born Airman in the R.F.C. and R.A.F.

The first Rhodesian-born member of the R.F.C. seems to have been Daniel Sievewright Judson, or “Pat” as he was known. Born in Bulawayo in 1898, he was educated in South Africa and in Bulawayo, where he attended St. George’s School and the Milton School. His Australian-born father was the redoubtable Dan Judson, an early pioneer of Rhodesia and a well-known Rhodesian soldier, who commanded the famous patrol tasked with rescuing those besieged at Mazoe, near Salisbury, during the 1896 Matabele Rebellion. During World War One, “Pat”, still only a mere boy, was to serve in the German South-West African campaign with the First Rhodesia Regiment, before later joining the Queen’s Westminster Rifles in England.

Judson subsequently transferred to the R.F.C., and by April 1916 was serving on the Western Front as an observer with No. 9 Squadron, before training as a pilot. He was wounded in early 1918, and thereafter ferried aircraft from the United Kingdom to France⁶. The intrepid “Pat” Judson went on to carve a niche for himself as a pioneer of Rhodesian and southern African aviation before being tragically killed in an air-accident at Salisbury, Rhodesia in 1931.

manpower during World War Two, and Rhodesia would provide more soldiers per head of population than any other nation in the British Empire! (Author’s Note: *For What?*)

⁵Rhodesian-born men, and at least one woman, were evident in various regiments of the British Armed Forces of World War One, including the “Rhodesian” Platoons of the King’s Royal Rifle Corps (K.R.R.C.); the Royal Lancaster Regiment; the Artist’s Rifles and London Regiment, the Royal Field Artillery (R.F.A.), King Edward’s Horse (K.E.H.); the Queen’s Westminster Rifles and the Women’s Royal Navy Service (“Wrens”). One Rhodesian-born man also entered the R.M.C. Sandhurst and served with the cavalry branch of the Indian Army during the last days of World war One.

⁶ J. McAdam, *Pat Judson: First Rhodesian-born Airman*.

The First Rhodesian-born air-ace : Major G.L. “Zulu” Lloyd

The next Rhodesian-born airman to be found flying with the R.F.C. is George Lawrence “Zulu” Lloyd⁷, who initially served with the Staffordshire Yeomanry before transferring to the R.F.C.. He Joined No. 60 Squadron, R.F.C. in April 1917 (the period known as “Bloody April” to the Allies; the R.F.C. suffering immense losses) and flew Nieuports. Lloyd accounted for four German aircraft before transferring to No. 40 squadron.

Major Lloyd finished the War having been awarded the Military Cross and was officially accredited with eight victories. Major Lloyd was also the Twelfth highest-scoring “South African” air-ace of the First World War.

The Red Baron’s last Victim: Bulawayo-born D.G. “Tommy” Lewis

It was in April 1918 that one of the most remarkable events involving a Rhodesian-born airman serving in the R.F.C. transpired. David Greswolde Lewis⁸, Known as “Tommy” Lewis, born in Bulawayo in October 1898, became the last of the legendary Baron Von Richtofen’s eighty victories. Lewis attended the R.F.C. School in April 1917, and was commissioned in June that year. He served with No 78 (Home Defence) Squadron before transferring to No. 3 Squadron⁹ in March 1918¹⁰. it was shortly thereafter that Lewis encountered the “Red Baron”, the scourge of the western front.

David Lewis took off on the 20th April 1918 on an offensive patrol led by Captain Douglas Bell of his flight (C Flight), although the Commanding Officer, Major Raymond Barker, accompanied them. When climbing above the clouds to avoid German anti-aircraft fire, Lewis’ Flight lost touch with the rest and they continued the patrol –only six strong. The flight was subsequently attacked and Lewis later related in a letter written on his farm “*near Gwanda, in Southern Rhodesia*”¹¹:

⁷According to the Internet Web Site www.Aerodrome, Lloyd was born in Rhodesia on the 1 October 1892.

⁸ Lewis’ initials are sometimes given as D.G. Lewis, and at others as D.E. Lewis.

⁹ No 3 Squadron, R.F.C./R.A.F. was formed in May 1912.

¹⁰ Rhodesian Services Association Newsletter, 2004, Number 2.

¹¹ *The Red Knight of Germany*, Floyd Gibbons: Cassel and Company Ltd., Fourth edition, 1930,pp 361-363.

"About four miles over the German lines, we met approximately fifteen German triplanes, which endeavoured to attack us from behind, but Bell frustrated this attempt by turning to meet them, so the flight started with the two patrols firing at each other head on."

Lewis goes on to relate how "A few seconds after the fight began, Major Barker's petrol-tank was hit by an incendiary bullet which caused the tank to explode and shatter his machine."

David Lewis continues: "I was attacking a bright blue machine, which was on a level with me, and was just about to finish this adversary off when I heard the rat-tat-tat of machine-guns coming from behind me and saw the splintering of struts just above my head."

Lewis wheeled round and found himself face to face with *"Le petit rouge"*, the Bright Red Triplane, of Baron Von Richtofen. Lewis, flying a Sopwith Camel (No. B7393), *"...twisted and turned in the endeavour to avoid his line of fire, but he was too experienced a fighter, and only once did I manage to have him at a disadvantage, and then only for a few seconds, but in those few ticks of a clock I shot a number of bullets into his machine and thought I would have the honour of bringing him down, but in a trice the positions were reversed and he had set my emergency petrol-tank alight, and I was hurtling earthward in flames."* Lewis goes on to relate how he hit the ground just north-east of Villers-Bretonneux *"...at a speed of sixty miles an hour..."* and was thrown clear of the wreckage, and except for minor burns was completely unharmed.

Lewis's compass, his goggles, the elbow of his coat, and one trouser leg were hit by Richtofen's bullets, but it is truly miraculous how this young Rhodesian beat all odds to survive a duel with death incarnate. The rest of his flight had escaped complete annihilation through the timely arrival of a squadron of S.E.5s. Manfred Von Richtofen then commenced his pass, coming to within one hundred feet of the ground and waved to the Rhodesian, and a column of German Infantry.

Taken Prisoner, Lewis remained thus until the cessation of hostilities. He is mentioned in October 1918 as having received a food parcel on the 27 August that year, while incarcerated at Graudenz¹². Lewis later returned to Rhodesia and died at Salisbury in 1978. He was thereafter to be known as the Baron's last "Victory" and was invited to Germany in 1938 to attend the dedication of the new Richtofen Geschwader¹³.

Additional Rhodesian-born Flyboys: D.C. Dunlop, P.C.C. Hook, H.C. Eyre and B.J. Carnegie

¹² *South Africa Journal*, 19 October 1918, *Rhodesian War Notes*, p 111.

¹³ There are paintings depicting that fateful day in April 1918, by Digby Sinclair and Rich Thistle, Sinclair's depiction thereof being published in the *Rhodesian Services Association Newsletter*, 2004, Number 2, edited by H. Bomford.

Other Rhodesian-born men who served with the R.F.C./R.A.F. include Second-Lieutenant Hugh Clement Eyre, who was born in Salisbury, Rhodesia, and was the son of George Henry Eyre, who at one stage served as Postmaster-General of Rhodesia. Eyre was to lose his life on the 6 October 1918, while flying with No. 110 Squadron¹⁴ over Germany, and is buried at Cologne Southern Cemetery. He was 19 years of age at the time of his death and his parents were residing at "Edina", Church Avenue, Sidcup, Kent. It seems that Eyre may have been the first Rhodesian-born airman to be killed while serving with the Royal Air-Force¹⁵.

Paget Charles Crewe Blair Hook, known as "Paddy", and like Pat Judson, the son of a well-known Rhodesian Pioneer and fighting man, Godfrey Blair Hook¹⁶, also served in the Royal Air-Force during World War One. He received the British war Medal and Victory Medal. Hook later joined the South African Medical Corps (S.A.M.C.) and was appointed surgeon-General of the S.A.M.C. in January 1953, and retired as a Brigadier in 1955.

Balfour Johnston Carnegie¹⁷, a member of an old Rhodesian missionary family, who was born at Figtree, Southern Rhodesia in 1899, served with the 2nd Rhodesia Regiment in 1917 before also joining the R.F.C.¹⁸, and last, but not least, Duncan Campbell Dunlop, who served with the R.A.F. from 1917-1918 and according to the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean Historian, Beryl Salt, was apparently awarded the D.F.C during the war.¹⁹

Hats off To Rhodesia's Few

¹⁴ No. 110 Squadron was formed in November 1917. It crossed to France in Late August 1918, and until the cessation of hostilities flew long-distance day bombing missions equipped with the DH9A. The original complement of DH9As were the gift of the His Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Airco DH9A was designed the Aircraft Manufacturing Company's Chief Designer, De Havilland (Hence his initials). Nicknamed the "Ninak", the DH9A entered production in 1918, and 885 DH9As were produced prior to the cessation of World War One.

¹⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* Casualty Details: Grave Reference XI.G. 20. Cologne Southern Cemetery. Eyre's Place and Country of birth are given as Salisbury, Rhodesia.

¹⁶ Captain Godfrey Blair Hook, who served with the Bechuanaland Border Police during the Matabele War of 1893, and the Bulawayo Field Force during the Matabele Rebellion of 1896, was rescued by Lieutenant Fred Crewe after having his horse shot from underneath him during the latter campaign, hence Hook's bestowal of his rescuers Surname upon his son. Hook subsequently served with the Rhodesian Forces during the Second Anglo-Boer War.

¹⁷ Carnegie's Elder Brother, Lieutenant Theordore A. Carnegie, also born in Southern Rhodesia, at Hope Fountain, in 1896, was a Rhodesian Rhodes Scholar and was Killed in action in August 1917, while serving with the King's Royal rifle Corps (K.R.R.C.).

¹⁸ *Who's Who of Southern Africa, 1960.*

¹⁹ q.v. *A Pride of Eagles: The definitive History of the Rhodesian Air Force, 1920-1980*, Beryl Salt, et al. He is listed as having been Killed on active service in Natal, South Africa, in August 1940, while serving with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. The *South Africa Journal* also lists him among those "South Africans" having joined the R.F.C./R.A.F. during the latter part of World War One (*S.A. Journal, 3 January, 1918*).

As is evident, very few Rhodesian-born men seemed to have served in the Royal Flying Corps or Royal Air-Force during World War One²⁰, but it is altogether quite amazing that there were any, given the miniscule reservoir of White Rhodesian-born children who did serve in the Allied Armed Forces during the war²¹. Their record nonetheless, is intriguing and quite astonishing, given that only a handful served in the skies above the Western Front. Rhodesian-born airmen of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Air-Force served in at least six Squadrons of the R.F.C./R.A.F., namely No's 3, 9, 40, 60, 78 (HD), and 110 squadrons; they served as Pilots and Observers, in Fighters and Bombers, and flew, among other aircraft, *Nieuports*, *Sopwith Camels* and *D.H.9As*; they can, it appears, count at least one air-ace among their number, namely Major George "Zulu" Lloyd, with eight victories and Rhodesians may very well have received two decorations for operations conducted while flying with the R.F.C./R.A.F.; the Military Cross (M.C.), the latter being awarded to Major Lloyd, and the Distinguished Flying Cross (D.F.C.), apparently awarded to D.C. Dunlop.

Sadly, All for naught!

During World war Two, Rhodesia's contribution in the air, and elsewhere, would be immense. Not only would she provide pilots and aircrew, but would furnish the Royal Air-Force with no-less than Three Squadrons designated "Rhodesia"-namely No's 44 (Bomber), 237 (Fighter Reconnaissance) and 266 (Fighter) Squadrons. Other Rhodesians, among them, Squadron Leader Caesar Hull, R.A.F., would Command No 43 (Fighting Cocks) Squadron during the Battle of Britain²² and sacrifice his Life for "King and Country", and Wing-

²⁰ It is stated in the *South Africa Journal* of October 19, 1918, p 87 and October 26, 1918, p123, that the British South Africa Company "represented to the Air Ministry that it would give great satisfaction to the men ordinarily resident in Rhodesia, of whom a considerable number are serving in the Royal Air-Force, if they were allowed to wear on their uniform a distinctive badge to consist of the word 'Rhodesia' ", and that they had indeed been given approval for the badge to be worn by all ranks, who had resided in Rhodesia prior to joining the R.A.F., and who were serving in the Royal Air-Force at that time. Those Rhodesians who qualified to wear the badge, were later asked to send their names to the "Rhodesian Soldiers' Comfort Fund", giving particulars of their Rank, place of residence in Rhodesia, occupation there, and the date they had settled in Rhodesia.

²¹ At present I have been able to Find eleven other white men and women born in Rhodesia who served in the Allied armed forces during World war One. They include Cecil Leander John Bowen, born at Salisbury in 1895, and who served with Royal Lancaster Regiment, being M.I.D.s (*Lon. Gazette: 5/7/1919*), and who lost his life during the Norwegian Campaign of W.W.II, while serving as a Major with the Irish Guards; Lieutenant W. Coxwell, born in Salisbury, and died of wounds received in east Africa while serving with the King's African Rifles on the 18 October 1917; Captain Stewart Arthur Rodney-Ricketts, a Rhodesian Rhodes Scholar, who was awarded the M.C. while serving with the Royal Field Artillery, and was killed-in-action on the 31st October, 1917; Ronald Brodie McQueen, who according to the *South African Journals* dated 16 November 1918, and 27 April 1918, had been born at Umtali in 1899, and was the son of Major W.J. McQueen of the British South Africa Police (B.S.A.P.). Ronald McQueen is stated as having passed out of the R.M.C. Sandhurst and had been gazetted a Second-Lieutenant in the Indian Army, Cavalry Branch.

²² At least Three Southern Rhodesian-born and one Northern Rhodesian-born airmen served as Pilots during the Battle of Britain: namely Squadron Leader C.B. Hull; F/Lt. J.B. Holderness, P/O J.A.G. Chomley and J. Ellacombe (born in Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia), who served with No. 151 Squadron, R.A.F. and was badly

Commander Johnny Plagis, R.A.F., who would finish the war as the top-scoring Rhodesian air-ace of the War with 16 Victories, also distinguished themselves. Again, the Rhodesians would stand steadfast in their support of Britain and the Empire, only to pay the price of political expediency no more than Twenty- years later, and be called “Rebels” by the very people they had helped to protect from the perils of “Nazidom”²³.

burnt, remaining in the R.A.F. after the war and attaining the rank of Air-Commodore. Two of the Four Rhodesian-born pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain were killed during the battle: P/O J.A.G. Chomley (K.I.A. 8 August 1940) and Squadron Leader C.B. Hull (K.I.A. 7 September 1940): thus, half (or 50%) of Rhodesia’s entire complement of Pilots succumbed during the Battle of Britain!

²³ The selfsame people who have not proffered a semblance of an apology for their integral part in the destruction of Rhodesia, a Beautiful country (“the Bread Basket of Africa”), and their tacit support of “Mugabeism”!