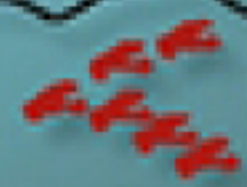
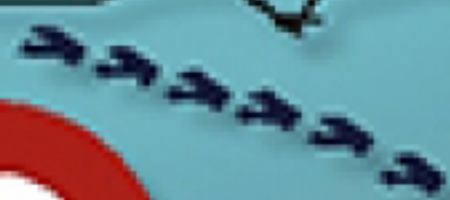




Volume 33, Number 4, Winter 2018



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# OVER THE FRONT

VOLUME 33  
NUMBER 4  
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The Great Maurice Béthou - Florence Maudslayi  
Episodes Of Air War On The Eastern Front  
La Be Avion Bores De Guyenne et Guyenne's Big  
Evil and Escape - American Aviation in WWI



# TANGIBLE LINKS

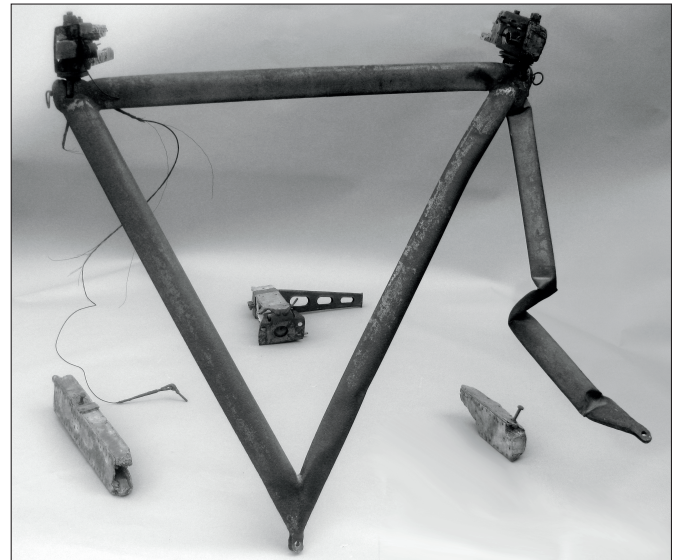
Moderated by  
Charles  
Walthall, Ph.D.

## WW1 Aircraft Artifacts

Surviving pieces of WW1 aircraft hold a special interest for aviation enthusiasts. Turnbuckles, small bits of fabric, joy sticks and rudder bars, instruments, pieces of fabric painted with national emblems or squadron insignia, and airframe parts are among the rarest of artifacts sought by collectors. As one can imagine, advanced, specialized knowledge is needed to pursue and properly identify many parts, the type of aircraft, squadron and aircrew associated with these artifacts.

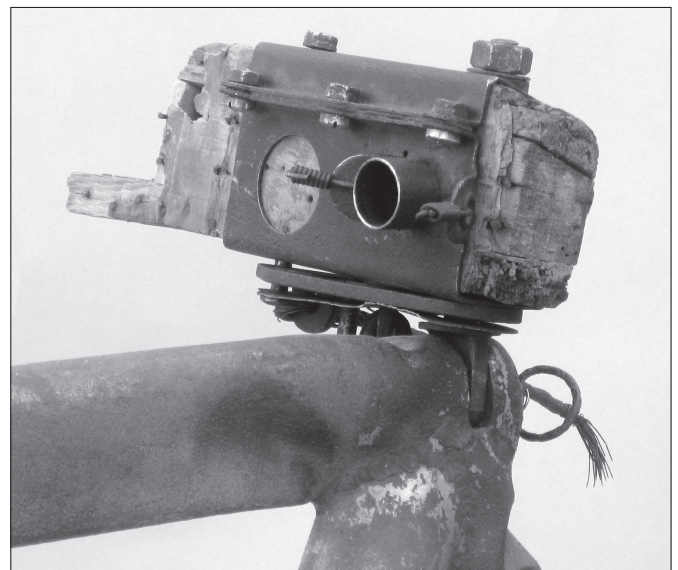
Charley Gosse has had great success finding and identifying parts from WW1 German aircraft- an especially challenging interest as most German aircraft relics tend to be small, easily transported and annotated bits, souvenired by ground troops or aircrew. Of special interest to Charley is the Albatros D.V: "I scooped-up pieces from the wreck of an Albatros D.V single-seater from a Sotheby's auction some 20-plus years ago. The man who originally collected the pieces believed that the plane fell to one of his countrymen - a Belgian aircrew that shot it down over Flanders. Or so the story goes...".

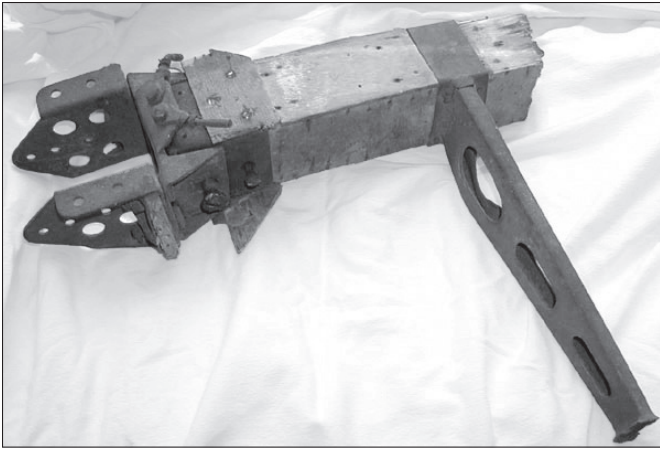
▼ **Below:** Albatros D.V rudder originally collected from a crash in Belgium. The crash was hard enough to twist the rudder. (Charley Gosse)



▲ **Above:** Forward leg of the port 'cabane' strut of the same aircraft, also twisted upon impact. (Charley Gosse)

▼ **Below:** Albatros D.V attachment point between the 'cabane' and upper wing. (Charley Gosse)





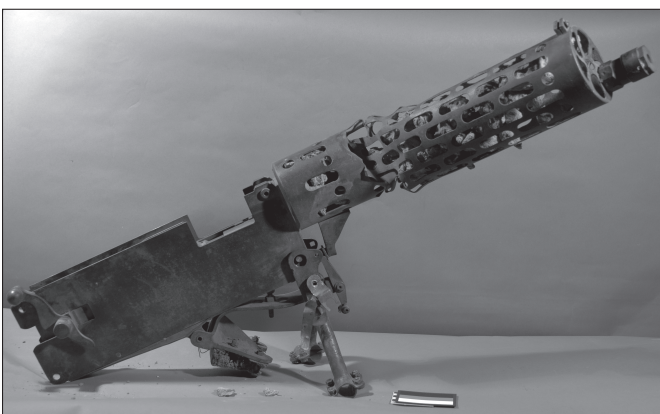
▲ **Above:** The lower port wing spar at the point where it connects to the fuselage. (Charley Gosse)

Charley narrowed the possibilities for the identity of the German pilot to either Adolf Techow of *Jasta 7* who fell to the crew of Lallemand and Cornelius<sup>1</sup> on 22 October 1917 just outside Dixmude at Ferme DeCeuninck; or Andreas Triebswitter of *Jasta 16b* who was downed by Jan Olieslagers over Woumen on 19 May 1918. The aircraft crashed hard enough to twist its rudder (Figure 1) and the forward leg of the port ‘cabane’ strut. The attachment point between the ‘cabane’ and upper wing is shown as (Figure 3). The lower port wing spar at the point where it connects to the fuselage are seen as (Figure 4).

Charley gained further knowledge of the Albatros D.Va when as a volunteer, and later consultant, he photographed and cataloged pieces deemed unusable for the restoration of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Albatros D.Va. Additionally, he had worked with a team cataloguing the wreckage of an Albatros D.Va in France, and is thus one of the few individuals with the unique experience of having hands-on experience with three separate Albatros scouts.

This experience equipped Charley with insights needed to answer questions about a historically important artifact. He relates this journey via the following story.

▼ **Below:** German I.M.G. 08 aircraft gun on exhibit as part of the NASM “Legend, Memory and the Great War in the Air” exhibit. (NASM)



## The Gun in the Exhibit

There has been a damaged German *luftgekühlt Maschinengewehr 08* (I.M.G. 08) aircraft machine gun on display in the “Legend, Memory and the Great War in the Air” exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC since the exhibit opened during November 1991. It is a haunting image: the gun is in poor condition and speaks of a violent end to the aircraft and its crew: the heavy metal cooling jacket is bent, pieces of the gun are missing, parts of the damaged gun mount and interrupter gear remain, and bits of soil fall from clumps forced into the cooling jacket upon impact. The exhibit caption for the gun tells little about the history of the gun.

However, the damaged German I.M.G 08 aircraft machine gun on display reminded me of a gun that is pictured in a photo postcard of French ace Captain Georges Guynemer. Iconic photographs from the Section *photographique de l’armée (S.P.A.)*,<sup>2</sup> show Captain Georges Guynemer on the steps of his family home in Compiègne, France: Paris is 72 Kilometers to the south and the front lines of the Somme are just 30 Km to the north. It is late February or perhaps early March, 1917, Guynemer is 22 years old and has 31 confirmed victories of the 53 he will eventually chock-up before taking-off from his airfield 11 September 1917 never to return again. Guynemer’s father will step away for a second photo that will be taken and used for a postcard to be printed throughout Europe for years to come.<sup>3</sup>

Like other pilots, Guynemer collected souvenirs from the wreckage of the planes he shot down. Guynemer kept his trophies in his hotel room in Paris<sup>4</sup> as well as his parents’ home. Although this practice was officially forbidden by the French *Service Aeronautique*, Guynemer managed to accumulate an impressive number of items. A month to the day after he went missing in action, a friend wrote that *Captain* Guynemer “made a special point of securing if possible some souvenir of each machine he destroyed, and these trophies – machine guns, instruments, engine parts, German flying caps, charts, and so on – now make a most imposing array on the main staircase of the house of his parents.”<sup>5</sup>

Could the gun on display in NASM be Guynemer’s trophy gun? And if so, how did it end up in the United States as part of the NASM collection?

A little research answered these questions: The gun on display in the NASM WW1 gallery is indeed the very same gun in the 1917 *S.P.A.* photos of Guynemer. Buried deep in the museum accession file for this object is a clipping from the Washington Post edition of 29 December 1946 with a photo of one of Guynemer’s two older sisters, Yvonne de La Noue, at a ceremony with General Carl Spaatz and, between them the very same gun itself, during a ceremony in which the gun was gifted to the USAAF in appreciation for the efforts of the fliers who fought for the liberation of France during World War II. The gun was subsequently donated by the Air Force to the Smithsonian during 1948.





▲ **Above:** (Left) *Captain* Georges Guynemer with his father on the steps of his family home in Compiègne, France during late February or early March, 1917. The I.M.G. 08 to the right of Guynemer is strikingly similar to the gun on display as part of the NASM “Legend, Memory and the Great War” exhibit. (Right) Commercially printed postcard of *Captain* Georges Guynemer taken on the same occasion as the *S.P.A.* photo on the left. (Left) *S.P.A.* (Right) Charley Gosse collection

### More Questions -With a Challenge!

Having determined the origins of the NASM gun, I mentioned my findings to Carl Bobrow and Chris Moore, two employees at NASM. Chris challenged me to determine from what *type of aircraft* the gun had come from and further, from *which of Guynemer’s victories*. Not to be outdone, Carl further asked, “*and what were the names of the German aircrew and what Flieger-Abteilung were they with?*”

### Framing the Date of the Victory

Sorting chronologically through photos of Guynemer over his 34 months of service and comparing them to the *S.P.A.* photos<sup>6</sup>, I determined that the photos in question must have been taken after he was promoted to *Capitaine* on 18 February 1917 as his kepi and cuff have three gold stripes denoting that rank.

One of the *S.P.A.* photos is enlarged on the left and shows *Capitaine* Guynemer wearing five medals. The middle and right-hand photo are from the same time-period and show the same five medals more clearly. The right photo was taken 8 March 1917 at a reception held at the *Aéro-Club de France*. The five awards as seen

from the viewer’s left to right are:

- Russian Cross of Saint George; awarded 22 January 1917, presented 16 March 1917
- *Chevalier de Légion d’Honneur*; awarded 24 December 1915
- Order of Prince Danilo I of Montenegro
- *Medaille Militaire*
- *Croix De Guerre*

If, indeed, Guynemer is wearing the Russian Cross of St. George, then its presentation on 16 March 1917 places this photo sometime after that date, although he is wearing the same medal in the Aero-Club photo of 8 March 1917. So, either the Aero-Club photo caption is wrong, or the date of the medal presentation is wrong, or perhaps he chose to not wait until the formal presentation to wear the medal.

The *S.P.A.* photos were taken before his *Légion d’Honneur* was elevated from *Chevalier* to *Officier* on 5 July 1917 (won 11 June 1917, and presented 5 July 1917). The *Chevalier* addition to the





▲ **Above:** One of the *S.P.A.* photos is enlarged on the left and shows *Capitaine* Guynemer wearing five medals. The photos in the middle and on the right are from the same time-period as the *S.P.A.* photo on the left and show the same five medals more clearly. The right photo was taken 8 March 1917 at a reception held at the *Aéro-Club de France*.  
 Photos: (Left ) Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine (Middle) *L'Aviation à COURVILLE pendant la 1e guerre mondiale* (Right) La Bibliothèque numérique de la *BnF*.

*Légion d'Honneur* is a gold planchet worn on the wearer's left breast and suspended from a scarlet ribbon while the *Officier* adds a rosette to the ribbon. There is no rosette visible in the *S.P.A.* photos on his *Légion d'Honneur*.

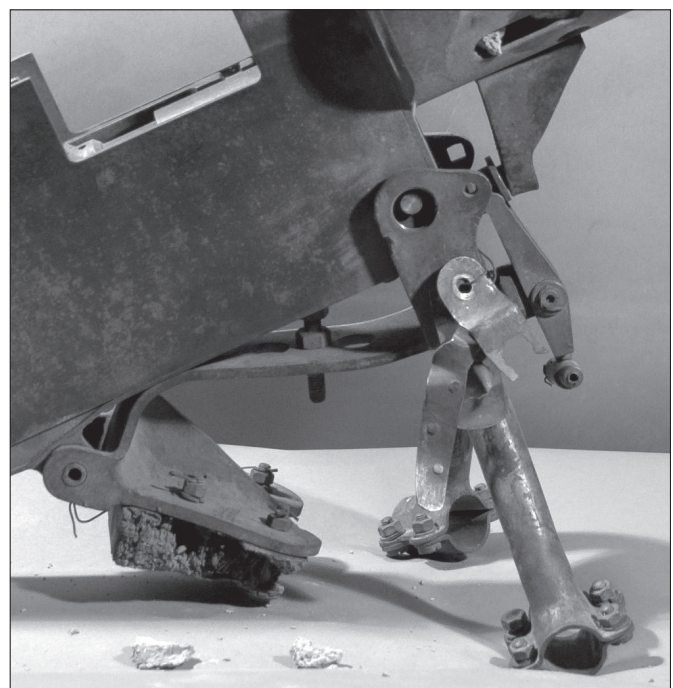
The number of palms on Guynemer's *Croix de Guerre* offer further clues to when the *S.P.A.* photos were taken. There are three columns of 6 rows of palms for a total of 18 palms, plus one palm below the center column for a total of 19 palms. Each palm was awarded for what the French referred to as a *Citations à l'ordre de l'armée* - similar to the British military *Mention in Dispatches*. His 19th citation was dated 14 February 1917 and his 20th citation was dated 26 March 1917, thus narrowing the range of dates between which these photos were taken. This, in turn, narrows the scope of victories for the source of the gun to the 35 victories confirmed from 19 July 1915 to March 1917. Guynemer did have *unconfirmed* victories but practically all of these were unconfirmed for the very reason that they fell behind the enemy's front line and, as such, could not be the source of his trophy.

### Identifying the Type of Aircraft Through Analysis of the Gun and its Mount

Having narrowed the potential dates for the victory, I turned my attention back to Guynemer's trophy. The gun bears the serial number 8971. I contacted Dave Watts, an authority on German machine guns,<sup>7</sup> and gave him this number. Dave explained that it would have been made during December, 1915, and would have gone into an aircraft assembled shortly thereafter. He further explained that, at that time, there was no specific production run dedicated to aircraft machine guns. Machine guns were being pro-

duced in large numbers for the infantry and if needed for use on aircraft, were simply pulled off of the factory production line and converted for aerial use. The most noticeable change for conversion to aerial use was replacing the unperforated, water-cooling jacket of the ground gun with a perforated jacket. After examining the museum's detailed, high-resolution photos of the gun<sup>8</sup> Dave

▼ **Below:** Close up of the gun mount. Note the splayed tubes beneath the front of the gun's receiver. The two small objects in the foreground of the image are bits of French soil that have fallen out of the cooling jacket. (NASM)





affirmed the production date as “1915 thru maybe early 1916.” Dave also confirmed that the gun had used the early, push-rod system of synchronization between the gun and the plane’s propeller.

The aircraft gun mount is still attached to the gun and, like the gun, is bent from the impact of the crash. Gun mounts on German aircraft were provided by the maker of the aircraft, not the maker of the gun, so in effect, the museum not only had the gun but a part of the aircraft as well.

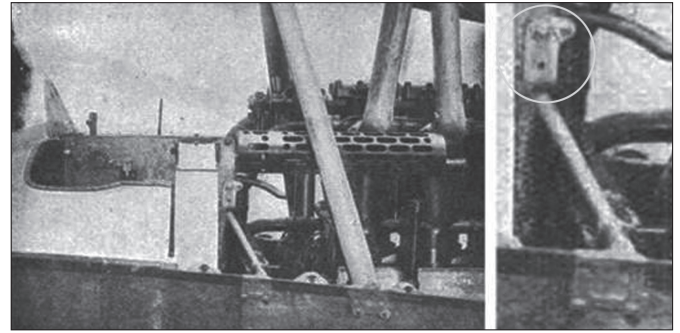
The greenish-gray paint on the gun mount was familiar: I had seen this paint on parts of Albatros D.V wreckage from my own collection, on the Albatros wreckage in France, and on the NASM Albatros D.Va.

I looked at the gun mount closely and found no inspection stamps. This is surprising as Albatros typically stamped their smaller, thin metal parts, such as the metal components of attachment fittings and compression bars on the wings; even flying wire assemblies had a tiny stamped, round metal piece attached to indicate that they had been inspected and passed. Albatros did not stamp heavier parts, such as cabane struts or the struts of the landing gear legs. Wood components, such as spars and ribs, were stamped with an ink stamp.

The aircraft gun mount is essentially a thick steel platform with two splayed round metal tubes which take the weight of the gun down onto a horizontal metal cross tube, to which the splayed tubes are clamped. The tubes and clamps are the sort of thin metal that would typically receive an Albatros factory stamp. The absence of stamps, (if the mount was indeed made by Albatros), may be because this aircraft was an earlier type made during 1915 or 1916 rather than a later model made during 1917 when inspection stamps were more prevalent.

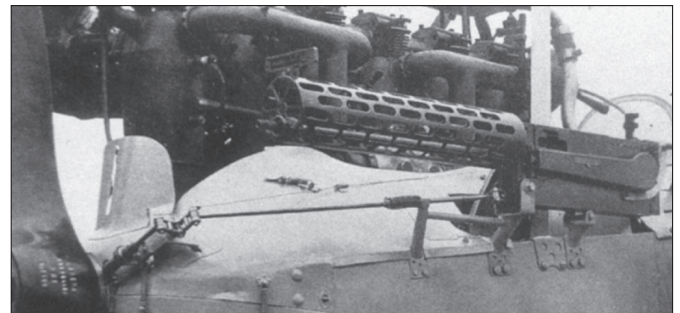


The gun is seated in a U-shaped stirrup, that prevents the gun from moving right or left. Once the gun is placed in the stirrup, a metal rod slides through an opening in the stirrup into a smaller opening on the gun and out the other side of the gun into an identical round hole in the opposite side of the stirrup. The rod holds the gun in place and allows some adjustment side-to-side. This upper part of the stirrup has a beak-like protrusion to accommodate another, smaller round hole. A mount with similar beak-like protrusion is seen in the mount for an I.M.G. 08 on an Albatros C.X<sup>9</sup> seen below.



▲ Above: An I.M.G. 08 mounted on an Albatros C.X<sup>14</sup> (left) with a close-up of the stirrup-like mount showing the beak-like protrusion (right).: L’Aérophile

The mount on Guynemer’s trophy is of the same type used on an Albatros C.X. I went back to the first of the Albatros C-class aircraft and looked at their gun mounts. The brackets used to attach the *I.M.G. 08* to the Albatros C.I. are shown below. Note how the brackets on the C.I. are not connected to one another but are separate pieces while the mount on Guynemer’s trophy is one solid unit, an improvement over the C.I.



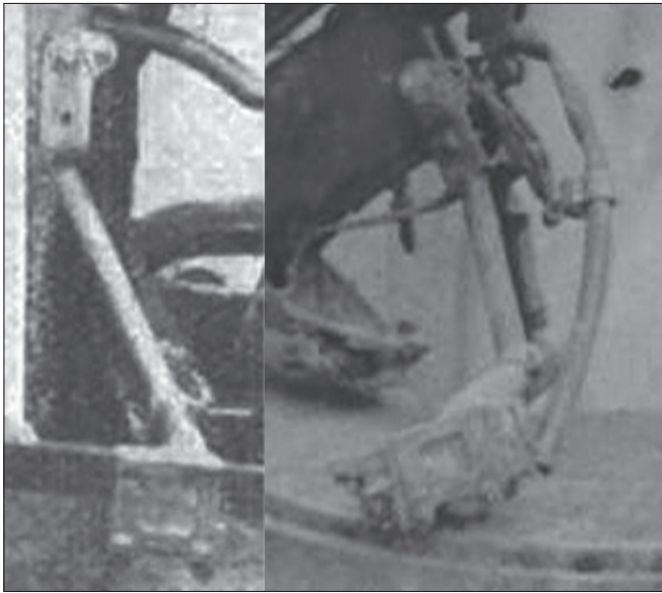
▲ Above: An I.M.G. 08 mounting to an Albatros C.I. Note how the brackets on the C.I. are not connected to one another but are separate pieces. (Peter Grosz)

◀ Left: Close up of the NASM gun mount. Note the clamps on the tubes that are attached to the cross bar when holding the weight of the gun. (NASM)



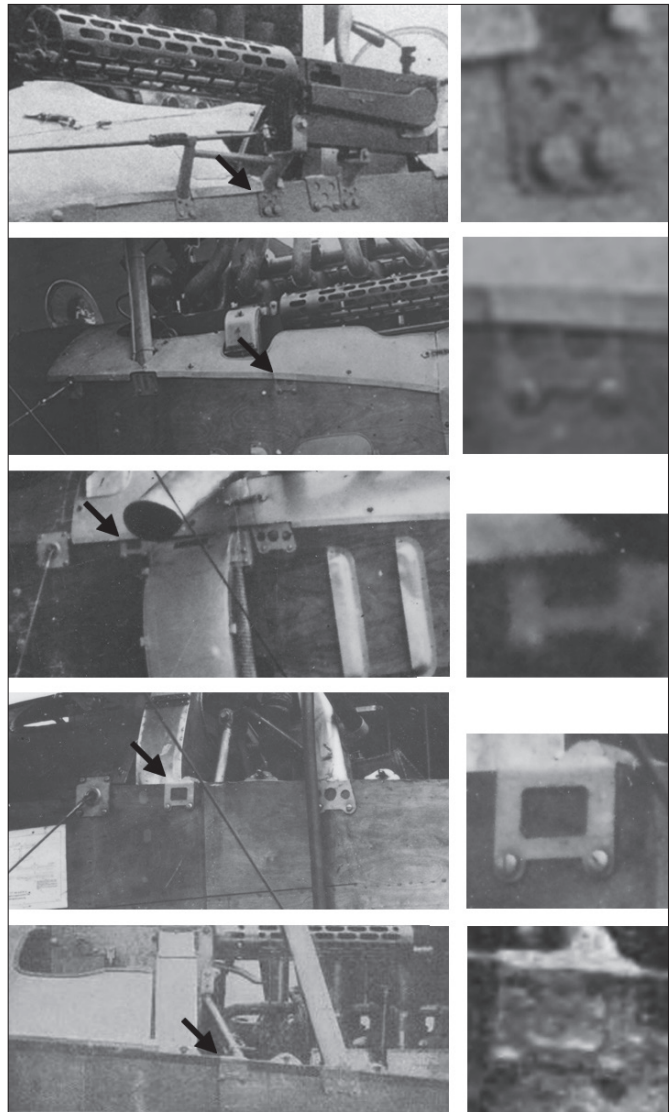
The fuselage-spanning cross tube which the gun mount splayed tubes clamp to is visible in the *S.P.A.* photos of Guynemer's trophy but is missing from the museum's artifact; it is also missing in the Washington Post photo of Guynemer's sister presenting the gun to General Spaatz during 1946. The missing cross tube slides into metal fittings bolted to each side of the fuselage. The fittings are rectangular with a cut-out rectangular center. These fuselage fittings, in turn, are attached to longerons running the length of the fuselage.

The right fuselage metal fitting which attaches the absent fuselage-spanning, cross tube is also missing, but is visible in the 1917 photograph of Guynemer with his trophy (right below). Two metal rounded tabs with holes for bolts protrude from the right and left ends of the bottom of the fitting. It is identical to the fitting on the C.X's gun mount shown on the left below.



▲ Above: The right fuselage metal fitting which attaches this missing, fuselage-spanning tube is also long gone, but it is seen in the photograph of Guynemer with his trophy, a close-up of which is shown on the right. This fitting is rectangular with a cut-out rectangular center. Two metal rounded tabs with holes for bolts protrude from the right and left ends of the bottom of the fitting. It is identical to the fitting on the C.X's gun mount shown on the left. (L'Aérophile)

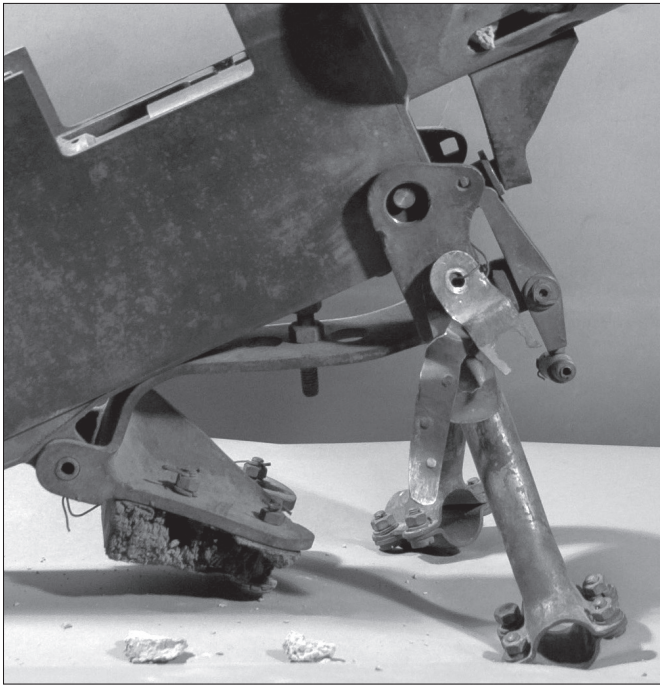
The five rows of photos below show the same *type* of fitting on the Albatros C.I through C.X beginning with the C.I. On the C.I and C.III the fitting has a different design but on the C.V, C.VII and C.X it is identical to the fitting attached to Guynemer's trophy. This suggests that Guynemer's trophy did not come from the earlier C.I or C.III but rather from either the C.V, C.VII or C.X.



▲ Above: The five rows of photos below show the same type of fitting on the Albatros C.I through C.X beginning with the C.I. On the C.I and C.III the fitting has a different design but on the C.V, C.VII and C.X it is identical to the fitting attached to Guynemer's trophy. (Photos - top to bottom - Peter Grosz, L'Aérophile, La Bibliothèque numérique de la BnF, La Bibliothèque numérique de la BnF, L'Aérophile)

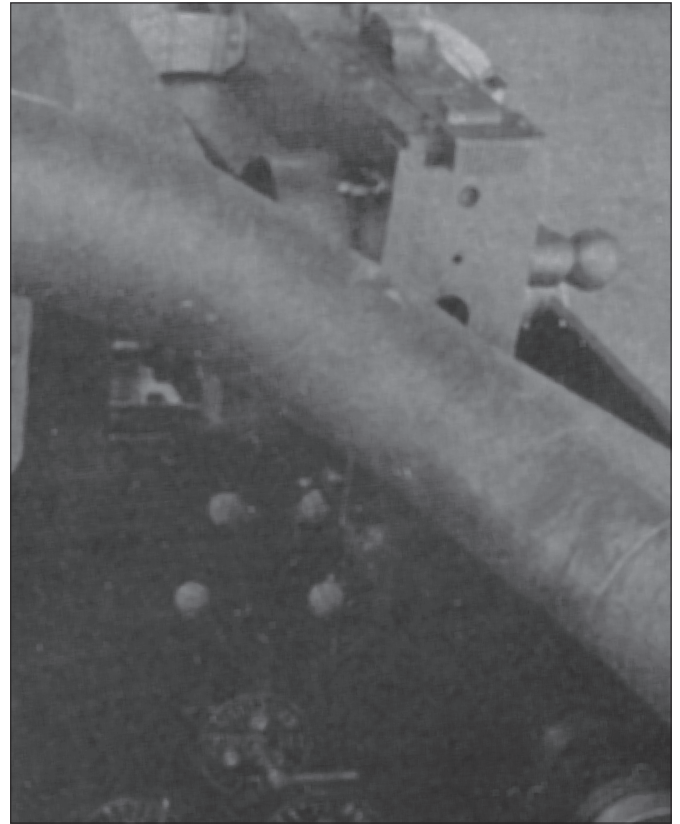


Looking back at photo FigureGun4 towards the aft end of the gun mount is a rounded metal tab standing up on the mount through which a rod slides into a corresponding fitting on the bottom of the gun. The aft end of the mount bends down and is scalloped to reduce weight. Four holes for bolts are drilled through the scalloped shape. These bolt holes are butted-up to one of the aircraft's plywood bulkheads – also called a former – and bolts with spacers are slipped through these holes into holes drilled into the plywood bulkhead and then are attached with nuts, the assembly firmly holding the gun mount in place on the aircraft. The upper two bolts are closer together than the lower two bolts, as seen below.



▲ **Above:** The rear portion of the gun mount and remaining plywood on the NASM gun. Note that the upper two bolts are closer together than the lower two bolts. (NASM)

Guynemer's trophy has all four bolts still attached with their spacers and nuts, along with a portion of the aircraft's plywood; on impact, the gun mount was torn out of this plywood to which it had been attached. This rear portion of the gun mount and remaining plywood is compared to a photograph of bulkhead #5 – counting back from the nose of an Albatros C.X shown below. On the Albatros C.X, this bulkhead also serves as the pilot's instrument panel.



▲ **Above:** The rear portion of a gun mount on bulkhead #5 (counting back from the nose of the fuselage) of an Albatros C.X. On the Albatros C.X, this bulkhead or former also acts as the pilot's instrument panel. (Peter Grosz)



The fact that the rear end of the gun mount of Guynemer's trophy attached to a plywood bulkhead eliminates the Albatros C.III as a possibility. The front section of a contemporary drawing of a captured Albatros C.III<sup>10</sup> is shown on the left below. On the right below is a photograph of Albatros C.III C. 1388/16, both images scaled to each other. The first five plywood bulkheads and

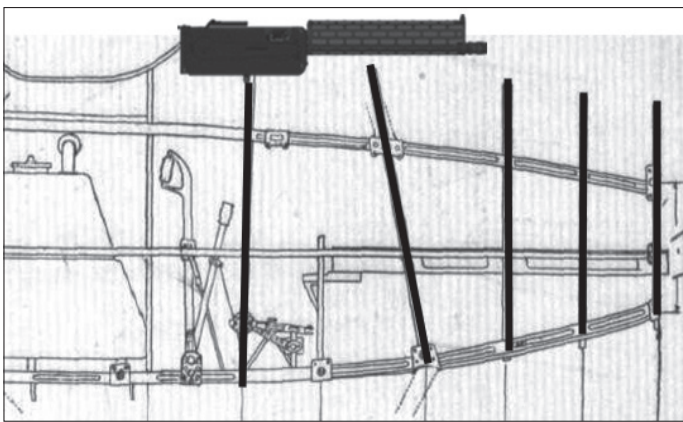
the I.M.G. 08 are outlined in red over the drawing and the photograph. The rear end of the gun mount for the I.M.G. 08 when it was attached to the Albatros C.III was not attached to a plywood bulkhead because it did not exist in that location and, therefore, we know that Guynemer's trophy was not flown in a C.III.



▲ **Above:** The front section of a contemporary drawing of a captured Albatros C.III<sup>15</sup> is shown on the left below. On the right below is a photograph of Albatros C.III C. 1388/16, both images scaled to each other. The first five plywood bulkheads and the I.M.G. 08 are outlined in red over the drawing and the photograph. The rear end of the gun mount for the I.M.G. 08 when it was attached to the Albatros C.III was not attached to a plywood bulkhead because it did not exist in that location and, therefore, we know that Guynemer's trophy was not flown in a C.III. Image Credit: (Left) L'Aérophile; (Right) La Bibliothèque numérique de la BnF

Pilot's disliked the gun being so far forward on the C.III and one of the refinements of the C.V was to bring the gun further aft and much closer to the cockpit and pilot. On the left below is the front section of a contemporary scale drawing of a captured Albatros C.V<sup>11</sup>. The first five bulkheads are highlighted and the I.M.G. 08 is shown positioned directly above bulkhead five to which the aft fitting of Guynemer's trophy would have been attached. A

photograph of Albatros C.V C. 1176/16 is shown on the right. Because the position of the aircraft in the photo is not perfectly perpendicular to the camera lens, an exact comparison cannot be made but it appears close enough. In other words, Guynemer's trophy could not have been attached to an Albatros C.I or C.III, but it could have been attached to an Albatros C.V.



▲ **Above:** A photograph of Albatros C.V C. 1176/16 is shown on the right. Because the position of the aircraft in the photo is not perfectly perpendicular to the camera lens, an exact comparison cannot be made but the similarity is strong. Thus, Guynemer's trophy could have been attached to an Albatros C.V. (Left) Jean La Gorgette's drawing in L'Aérophile for January 1917, page 14. (Right) La Bibliothèque numérique de la BnF

Only 128 Albatros C.V, including three prototypes, were built. Of the 128, seventy five were ordered in March of 1916 and 50 were ordered during January 1917. We know from the serial number of Guynemer's trophy that it went into an aircraft built at the end of 1915 or early 1916, so it seems possible that it either went into one of the prototypes, or one of the 75 Albatros C.V ordered during

March 1916.

Some 500 Albatros C.VII were built, with the first 175 ordered in July 1916, which is probably too late for a gun that came off the assembly line at the end of 1915.



Guynemer's trophy used the early push-rod synchronizer which allowed the gun to shoot through the propeller. This first type of synchronizer was a straight, fixed horizontal rod which came out of the block of the gun and ran parallel to the perforated cooling jacket until it reached the front of the gun and connected to a vertical rod. The linkage for the push-rod is still attached to the gun and can be seen in the photo from the gallery. If it was not attached, we would still know that this gun could not have used the later, flexible-drive synchronizer because the later design attached to the bottom of the gun block, and the gun mount platform on Guynemer's trophy is in the way of where it would have attached.

Like the C.III, the C.V used the push-rod system. We know this because, again, the C.V were ordered in March, 1916, and according to Dave Watts, the flexible synchronizer which replaced the push-rod system was not available until some months later.<sup>12</sup>

Of the four photos I have found of the Albatros C.VII which are clear enough to show the area beneath the perforated cooling jacket of the *L.M.G. 08* where one would expect a push-rod running parallel to the jacket, none show a push-rod. I am not ready to suggest that the Albatros C.VII had the flexible drive due to a lack of photographic evidence – perhaps it had a hybrid system – but it did not have the push-rod system. *What we do know is that the C.V did have the push-rod and the C.VII did not.*

Other types of Albatros aircraft at the front before March of 1917 either did not have forward-firing, fixed guns or, for those that did, such as the D-type scouts, a completely different type of gun mount was used with splayed tubes at the front, but positioned vertically, straight down onto a fuselage-spanning metal tube at the rear.

Almost all of Guynemer's 31 confirmed victories prior to March 1917 fell within French lines and therefore were readily identifiable. Only one was identified simply as an "enemy aircraft". Every other victory is specifically named to a manufacturer and type, usually a two-seater reconnaissance aircraft. Of these 31 confirmed victories, three theoretically could be the source of Guynemer's trophy:

his 20th, Albatros C-type on 10 November 1916, 12:25, near Morcourt

his 25th, Albatros of undetermined type on 27 December 1916, west of Péronne

his 26th, Albatros C-type in flames on 23 January 1917, near Maurepas

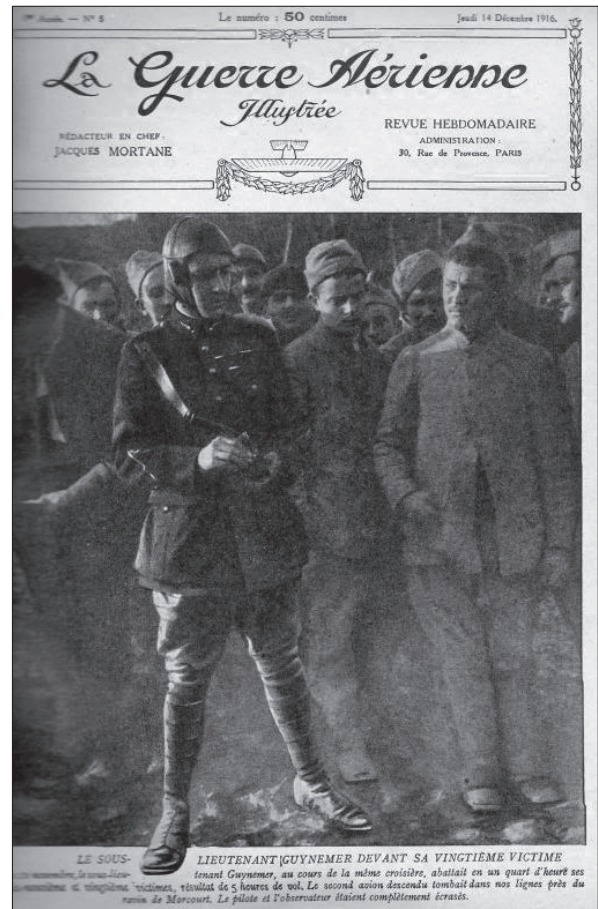
The undetermined Albatros type on 27 December 1916, is unlikely because if Guynemer was able to pull the gun from this wreckage the record of its type – C for two seater, D for one seater - would not have remained "undetermined". The Albatros C-Type on 23 January 1917, came down in flames, and is also unlikely as there is no evidence of burn marks on Guynemer's trophy, or the gun mount, or the plywood still attached to the mount.

Guynemer also claimed an Albatros C-type on 26 January 1917, but the crew of this aircraft were taken prisoner-of-war and, therefore is not relevant as their aircraft did not suffer the type of catastrophic crash that bent the *I.M.G. 08* and its gun mount.

Guynemer also claimed his 32nd, an Albatros C-type on 16 March 1917 at 9:08 over Serres, shared with *Lt* Raymond; his 34th, another Albatros C-type on 16 March 1917 at 14:30 over Regneville-en-Haye; and his 35th, an Undetermined Type on 17 March 1917 at 13:30 over Atilloncourt, but all three of these seem too late to be considered. Unfortunately, the chronology of the palms on his Croix de Guerre does not help us eliminate these March victories because his 20th palm was not awarded until 26 March 1917.

One of the three possible Albatros C-types does stand-out irrefutably as an Albatros C.V, and that is his 20th victory on 10 November 1916. French reports of the wreckage describe the aircraft as an "Albatros C" type and note the horsepower of its engine as 220 hp. The engines employed in the two-seater Albatros aircraft were 160 hp for the C.III, 220 hp for the C.V, 200 hp for the C.VII and 260 hp for the C.X, so we know that the 10 November 1916 victory was an Albatros C.V.

A photo of Guynemer on the cover of *La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée* for 14 December 1916, shows him looking at the wreckage of his 20th victim.



▲ Above: Guynemer still wearing his British flying cap, on the cover of the 14 December 1916 issue of *La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée*. The photo was taken on the afternoon of 10 November 1916. The victor is looking at the ground before him and, according to the caption, at the wreckage of his 20th victim. The sun illuminates the scene from the left at a low angle, so it is well past the mid-day hour - when he engaged his 20th victim. (*La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée*)



This photo was taken on the afternoon of 10 November 1916 and he is in his flying uniform, still wearing his British flying cap that he has not yet unsnapped from under his chin. The victor is looking at the ground before him and, according to the caption, the wreckage of his 20th victim, as are infantrymen who came to the scene, except for two *poilu* who are staring at Guynemer. The sun comes from the left at a low angle so it is well past the mid-day hour when he engaged his 20th. Guynemer said of this victory:

*“J’avais fait 5 heures de vol depuis le matin. Je pouvais me reposer et j’allais saluer mes victimes. L’avion était un biplace Albatros 220 chevaux Mercedes. Le moteur était enfoncé à deux mètres dans le sol. Le pilote gisait, démembré sous les morceaux de la mitrailleuse. Au milieu du crâne scalpé, un petit trou rouge. Pas une égratignure aux mains. On le souleva, les jambes et les bras craquèrent sinistrement, désarticulés. A 50 mètres de là se trouvait le sous-lieutenant observateur: sa main crispée serrait un browning. Je ramassais la plaque de l’appareil et emportais le casque du pilote, percé d’une balle.”*<sup>13</sup>

The engine, he said, was driven two meters into the ground. The pilot lay under the pieces of the machine gun. 50 yards away was the observer whose clenched hand clutched his machine gun. Guynemer says that he picked up the aircraft’s identification plate and the pilot’s helmet.

A photo of the wreckage from the 4 January 1917 edition of *La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée* is shown below in a curious story about Guynemer’s 20th victory. Instead of providing an account of the action, the author, Jacques Mortane, presents the text of a letter supposedly written by a *poilu* who was present when the plane crashed and has taken one of the plane’s guns. The *poilu* is mailing the gun home to his friend, Claude, along with the explanatory letter. The *poilu* describes what he has seen and how, as he was looking at the wreckage, a vehicle arrived with the aviator Guynemer to look at the wreckage and take a small souvenir.

The story, of course, is contrived. Infantryman would not be allowed to mail home guns weighing 18 Kg from the front. Indeed, enemy aircraft coming down in combat areas were quickly safeguarded and their engines and guns were shipped to the *S.H.A.e.* which studied them with great interest, especially the engine from an Albatros C-type which typically was 160 Hp for an Albatros C.III, not 220 Hp, as found in this wreckage, so this wreck would have been closely examined.

The practice of taking souvenirs from aircraft wreckage was specifically prohibited and, in comments about Guynemer’s habit of doing this, Mortane writes elsewhere that officialdom turned a blind-eye to Guynemer’s misbehavior, just as they also did when he more famously would drive his roadster on the sidewalks of Paris.

The evidence points to Guynemer’s trophy coming from one of the 128 Albatros C.V aircraft that were built and, indeed, from the only Albatros C.V that Guynemer is known to have shot down because of its horsepower: his 20th victory on 10 Novem-



▲ **Above:** The wreckage of Guynemer’s 20th victory from the 4 January 1917 edition of *La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée*. One of the *poilu* bystanders figures prominently in Jacques Mortane’s story published in the issue about Guynemer’s 20th victory. (*La Guerre Aérienne Illustrée*)

ber 1916. Guynemer’s 20th victory also fits with a crash that violently destroyed the aircraft and occupants, sending its motor two meters into the earth and exerting enough force to bend the barrel and cooling jacket of its *I.M.G. 08*. I have concluded that this gun is from an Albatros C.V, and, specifically, an Albatros C.V shot-down by Guynemer at 12:25 pm over Morcourt, France, on 10 November 1916 – his 20th confirmed victory. He had just shot-down his 19th – an Albatros scout - over Nesle ten minutes beforehand. Morcourt is about 25 km north-northwest of Nesle. The C.V crashed “*pres de Morcourt*” or, more specifically, “*500 mètres de la route d’Amiens, au long du ravin de Morcourt.*”

### Identifying the Aircrew and their Unit

Having identified the aircraft and the date of the victory, I could now look to the literature to identify the German aircrew and their unit. The French Air Service reported that the enemy aircraft came down at Morcourt. Many French news accounts also report this and further enhance the location description as the *Ravine de Morcourt* - which helps differentiate the location from other towns with Morcourt as part of their name. The German Air Service reported 8 aircraft lost on 10 November 1916 with a total of 13 casualties. The closest of these, which specifically involved a two-seater, was a loss near Beaulencourt which is about 25 miles northwest of Morcourt. The authors Norman Franks, Frank Bailey and Rick Duiven in their 1999 work, *Casualties of the German Air Service*, (p. 196), identify the two-seater crew as *Ltn* Albert Eder, pilot, and *Ltn* Karl Staemm, observer, of *Flieger-Abteilung 13*, both KIA. Frank Bailey and Christophe Cony, in their 2001 work, *French Air Service War Chronology 1914-1918*, (p. 87), further tie together Guynemer’s 20th victory with “possibly” the German loss of Eder and Staemm.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Adjt* George Victor Lallemand and *Lt* Henri Emile Cornelius, *3eme Escadrille*.

<sup>2</sup> *Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine*, photo number VAL 249/080

<sup>3</sup> Collection of the author

<sup>4</sup> As reported in Report of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and Financial Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents for the Year Ended June 30 1948, United States Government Printing Office, page 130.

<sup>5</sup> D.W. Thorburn in "Guynemer – An Appreciation" for the 11 October 1917, issue of the British aviation journal "Flight." The date of publication is one month to the day from the date of Guynemer's disappearance. It is late February or perhaps early March, 1917, Guynemer is 22 years old and has 31 confirmed victories of the 53 he will eventually chock-up before taking-off from his airfield on September 11, 1917, never to return again.

<sup>6</sup> The *S.P.A.* photos – VAL 249/079, VAL 249/080 and VAL 250/113 - are dated March 1, 1917. Elsewhere VAL 250/113 is dated February 17, 1917, but we know that this is at least a day too early. Some sources provide other dates for the *S.P.A.* photos or note on the postcards made from VAL 250/113 that the guns are from this or that victory. For example, the photo was published in the 27 May 1917 edition of the Chicago Sunday Tribune and the accompanying text states that the machine guns are from his 37th victory. Dennis Hylands published the same photo of Guynemer and his caption states that the guns are from his 31st victory.

<sup>7</sup> Telephone conversation November 2, 2012

<sup>8</sup> Correspondence March, 2017

<sup>9</sup> From the cover of the issue of the French aeronautical journal *L'Aérophile* for December 1-15, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> From Jean La Gorrette's drawing in *L'Aérophile* for January, 1917, page 14

<sup>11</sup> From the March 7, 1918, issue of the British aviation journal, *Flight*, page 252.

<sup>12</sup> I asked Dave what type of synchronizer would have been used on an I.M.G. 08 installed in an Albatros C.V built in March, 1916. He responded that "The early system was in use thru the first four or five months of 1916. This is when Albatros had their Heidtke synchronizer system on their fighters, it's possible they were utilized on their two-seaters, I just don't know. Most likely it was still the early pulse push rod system."

<sup>13</sup> "I had five hours of flight since morning. I could rest and greet my victims. The plane was a two-seater Albatros 220 horsepower

Mercedes. The engine was driven two meters into the ground. The pilot lay dismembered under the pieces of the machine gun. In the middle of the scalped skull, a small red hole. Not a scratch on the hands. He was lifted, his legs and arms crackled, disarticulated. At 50 meters away was the 2/*lieutenant* observer: his clenched hand squeezed a browning. I picked up the machine's data plate and took the pilot's helmet [which was] pierced by a bullet."

<sup>14</sup> From the cover of the issue of the French aeronautical journal *L'Aérophile* for December 1-15, 1917.

<sup>15</sup> From Jean La Gorrette's drawing in *L'Aérophile* for January, 1917, page 14

