



## University Libraries Special Collections & University Archives

### World War I Dog Fighting Photographs

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#### Collection Summary

<b>Title:</b>	World War I Dog Fighting Photographs
<b>Call Number:</b>	MS 88-10
<b>Size:</b>	0.25 linear feet
<b>Acquisition:</b>	Source unknown
<b>Processed by:</b>	LTM, 8-26-1987; JEF, 2-3-1998; MN, 2-9-2010
<b>Restrictions:</b>	None

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#### Content Note

These celebrated photographs were first reproduced in the anonymous autobiography of a Royal Air Force officer in the 1930s. The author claimed that they were taken with a camera fitted to his aircraft's cabane struts and operated automatically each time the machine-gun trigger was pressed. The photographs are now believed to be fakes; however, they give a good impression of what air fighting might have been like in World War I.

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#### Administrative History

According to Edwards Park's article in *Smithsonian* (January 1985), these photographs were faked by using models and trick photography. Peter Grosz and Karl Schneide uncovered the identity of the anonymous RAF officer and of Mrs. Cockburn-Lange. It turns out that Wesley Archer of Nyack, New York, faked the photographs and wrote *Death in the Air* (1933) to earn some money during the Depression. "Betty," Archer's wife, is Gladys Maud Cockburn-Lange. Betty's actual name is Gladys Maude Archer. It is true that Archer served with the Royal Flying Corps in 1917 and he did see action, but the rest is fiction. Grosz uncovered the hoax while he was studying in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum where he realized that the Archer collection photographs were the original Cockburn-Lange Collection of Aerial Combat Photographs and he discovered a diary that explained the cover up. The photographs are also reported as fakes in the *Marshall Cavendish Illustrated Encyclopedia of World War I*, Volume 7, pages 2228-2229.

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## Series Listing

Series 1	Box 1 FF 1-12	Photographs
Series 2	Box 1 FF 13	Article

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## Box and Folder Listing

### Series 1 – Photographs

Box 1	FF 1	Contains a photograph that shows a German pilot falling from his burning plane to his death. The photograph also describes the fact that these photographs were taken by a pilot of the Royal Air Force during actual combat in World War I. Apparently he used a fast German lens in a camera fixed on a special mounting in the fuselage of his plane in such a way that a photograph was snapped at the first press of his gun triggers. Only one photograph could be taken each time he went up, for he had to land to adjust the camera for the next photograph. Only 57 are any good at all out of the several hundred plates that were taken. We have only 11 prints. The originals are in the Cockburn-Lange Collection. The anonymous RAF pilot was later killed.
Box 1	FF 2	Contains a photograph entitled "His Last Loop." A young but skillful pilot in a French Nieuport has just shot down in flames an enemy aircraft. In his youthful excitement, he looped, not knowing that the enemy had in the fight shot a burst of machine gun fire into the spars of his wings. At the top of the loop the weakened spars gave way and he followed the enemy to his death. North of Cambrai, late in 1917.
Box 1	FF 3	Contains a photograph entitled "A Dog Fight." A Bristol Fighter, engaged in photographing the German defenses and protected by a patrol of a flight of S. E. 5s, is attacked by a patrol of Albatros planes. The Germans knowing that if the Bristol gets safely back with the photographs of their new gun emplacements, the British artillery will immediately destroy them, fight desperately to shoot it down. The S. E. 5s, however, know their business and quickly engage the Germans. In the resulting confusion the Bristol makes its escape with the photographs.
Box 1	FF 4	Contains a photograph entitled "A Crash in Mid-Air." A patrol of Fokkers is engaged by Bristol Fighters and S. E. 5s. In the melee an S. E. 5 pilot shot a burst into the cockpit of a Fokker. The pilot was either killed or wounded, for the plane lost control and plunged earthward. The pilot of a Bristol Fighter, apparently not realizing the Fokker was flying wild, held his course too long. Colliding, their wings enterlocked in a tangle of debris, the two planes plummet to their doom.
Box 1	FF 5	Contains a photograph entitled "The Eagle's Swoop." It shows a Pfalz D III chasing a S. E. 5, taken with the camera facing backwards and outwards, rather than aligned along the line of fire of the machine guns.
Box 1	FF 6	Contains a photograph showing Albatros D Vs pouncing on a straggling DH 4.

Box 1	FF 7	Contains a photograph showing a LVG (German) breaking up.
Box 1	FF 8	Contains a photograph entitled "The Attack" showing a Bristol plane attacking a German observation plane.
Box 1	FF 9	Contains a photograph entitled "The Straggler" showing British fighters attacking a German squadron from the rear.
Box 1	FF 10	Contains a photograph showing a British and German "dog fight."
Box 1	FF 11	Contains a photograph showing a German fighter chasing a British fighter from the rear.
Box 1	FF 12	Contains a photograph showing a P-51 "Mustang" fighter which toured the United States during World War II on behalf of the Victory Loan Drive in the air show "Wings of Victory."

## Series 2 – Article

Box 1	FF 13	Contains an article by Edwards Park, "The Greatest Aerial Warfare Photos Go Down in Flames," <i>Smithsonian</i> , January 1985, p. 102-113. This article explains that these photographs were faked by using models and trick photography.
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For information, please contact us at:

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