

**A WW1 PAIR TO A FIGHTER PILOT OF 4 (NAVAL) SQUADRON, ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE, WHO WAS KILLED WHEN HIS SOPWITH CAMEL WAS SHOT DOWN DURING A DOGFIGHT BY FUTURE 31 VICTORY ACE PAUL BILIK OF JASTA 7, 18 AUGUST 1917**



**BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS 'FLT. S. LT. C. R. W. HODGES. R.N.A.S.'**

Charles Raymond Walker Hodges was born on 22 September 1897, and joined the Royal Naval Air Service as a temporary Flight Sub-Lieutenant on 25 June 1916. He obtained his R.A.C. Certificate No. 3439 at Eastbourne on 18 August 1916 and was confirmed to the rank of Flight Sub-Lieutenant on 14 February 1917. Recommended for foreign service the same day, Hodges was posted to No. 4 (Naval) Squadron R.N.A.S., piloting Sopwith Camel's

Indecisive combats with enemy aircraft were recorded in combat reports by Hodges on 3 and 4 May 1917 and a further are recorded in Squadron records on 23 June and 3 July. On 18 August 1917, he was piloting Sopwith Camel B3938 in formation with 4 others when attacked by 20 enemy aircraft. He was apparently hit early in the fight for he got into a spin as if out of control, billowing smoke, east of Dixmude. Reported missing presumed killed, his aircraft was claimed by Lt n Paul Billik of Jasta 7, his 5 victory making him an ace. Billik would end the war with 31 aerial victories.

[http://www.theaerodrome.com/aces/germany/billik.php#google\\_vignette](http://www.theaerodrome.com/aces/germany/billik.php#google_vignette)

Details of Hodges demise are recorded by WW1 aviation historian Russ Gannon:

"With four luftsiege against his name Billik was posted to Jasta 7 on 6 Jul 17, then based at Thourout (Roulers) on the 4 ARMEE front. One might hazard to bring some much needed savvy to Jasta 7 in regards fighting the more aggressive British. Billik was employed as a kette commander.

18 Aug 17: 'Sopwith Eins' at Vladslo east of Dixmude timed 10.10 and given as diessesits.

Billik's #5 evidently reflects FSL CW Hodges from 4 Naval Squadron when flying Camel B3938.

FSL Hodges was a member of a five strong morning OP led by F/Cdr AM Shook which dived to the aid of an RE8 (34 Sqn Lt H Thorn & Lt R Rainsford) being attacked by five EA scouts near Dixmude; evidently the Joseph Jacobs kette of Jasta 7. However Jacobs would claim he broke off his attack on the Sopwith-2 seater (sic) on account that his guns jammed. Be that as it may, the Camels chased the Jacob Kette east over the Ghisteltes aerodrome where the Naval pilots then came under attack from more EA with the height advantage and attacking out of the sun – evidently the Billik kette. It would appear that FSL Hodges was flying alongside F/Cdr Shook when the Naval flight commander led his Camels back towards the lines, when the Camel of FSL Hodges was suddenly seen to side slip into a nose dive leaving behind a column of smoke – given as east of Dixmude at 09.10BT. Shook believed that Hodges had been hit by a bullet fired from long range. As Jacobs told things; he got to within 100m of a 'Sopwith' when it was apparently shot down by a machine flying below him – evidently Lt Billik.



During the scrapping F/Cdr Shook had sent down an Albatros down which was believed to have broken up below the fighting, whilst FSL RM Keirstead sent a second Albatros down seemingly completely OOC. The 34 Sqn crew also laid claim to the leading Albatros which attacked them

(evidently Lt Jacobs), which went into the record books as destroyed. However, as there was clearly no German fatality, twenty-twenty hindsight suggests that what was seen to break up lower down was the Camel of FSL Hodges (hence fatal results) but optimistically thought to reflect the Albatros sent down by F/Cdr Shook, and likewise the Albatros driven off by the 34 Sqn crew.

One would have to accord Billik's #5 the benefit of a doubt and adjudge that he had downed the Camel of FSL Hodges with a burst fired from longish range as the Camels retraced their steps back to Allied lines."

Hodges is commemorated by name on the Arras Flying Services Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. There is also a memorial to him in the Church of St John the Baptist at Thaxted, Essex, which reads:

*'MEMORY/ OF/ FLIGHT SUB LIEUT. C. RAYMOND WALKER HODGES R.N./ AGED 19 1/2 YEARS/ ELDER SON OF MAJOR CHARLES E. WALKER HODGES RFA/ AND OF LOUIE E. WALKER HODGES/ SHOT DOWN 10 MILES/ EAST OF DIXMUDE AT/ 12000 FEET UP IN A/ FIGHT AGAINST HEAVY/ ODDS/ AFTER HIS/ FLIGHT OF FIVE PLANES/ HAD ACCOUNTED FOR/ THREE OUT OF A TOTAL/ OF TWENTY SIX ENEMY/ MACHINES, ON AUG 18TH 1917/ A MODEST HERO/ LOVED BY ALL'.*



Condition EF, the Victory Medal officially re-impressed as issued. Sold with record of service and various copied combat reports for the period May to July, 1917. Ex Noonans April 2021