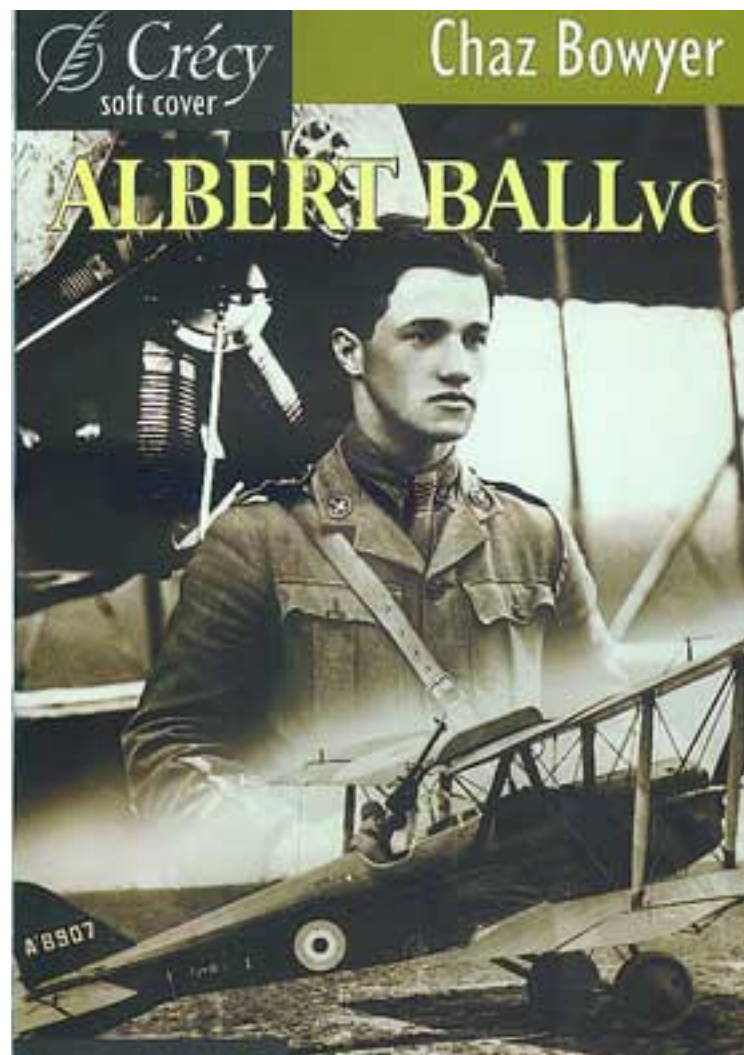


ALBERT BALL VC

Chaz Bowyer



In the 1st World War the daring exploits of pilot Albert Ball caught the imagination of the British public like no other. Ball acquired his wings in the RFC in January 1916 and was first posted to France in February of that year. There he joined No 13 Squadron and for a six-week period in March 1916 saw almost constant action flying the squadron's only single-seater aircraft, the Bristol Scout.

Moving to No 11 Squadron in May 1916, Ball's score quickly accumulated. He had acquired a reputation as a tenacious scout pilot, often

flying along in his preferred Nieuport and invariably returning to base with a near empty fuel tank. In August he returned to No 11

Squadron and soon after became the highest scoring scout pilot of the time. Waging his solitary aerial war, Ball became a true inspiration to his fellow pilots of the RFC at a time when their squadrons were being mauled.

Ball received many civic honours in recognition of his deeds and at the height of his fame was a household name. His deeds came to symbolise the hopes of a nation stunned at news of the carnage on the Western Front. But his life was to prove tragically short and he was killed in action just before his 21st birthday leading a patrol of SE5s over an area east of Lens. He had accounted for forty-four German aircraft and for his exemplary service was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

After joining the RAF at the age of sixteen as a Halton Aircraft Apprentice, Chaz Bowyer completed twenty-six years regular service before voluntarily retiring to become a full-time professional aviation history author, researcher and consultant. Since then his lifetime affinity with aviation history has resulted in nearly forty hardback books on the subject, as well as numerous paperback titles and hundreds of magazine articles. In addition he has edited and/or illustrated several other books and journals. His *History of the RAF*, published in 1977, has so far sold over 100,000 copies and continues to be reprinted; while his magnum opus *For Valour – The Air VCs* (1978) is universally acclaimed as the definitive work on that subject.

Crécy Publishing Ltd £10.95

Publication: August 2000

ISBN: 0 947554 89 0

This article has been republished online with Open Access.

Ministry of Defence © Crown Copyright 2023. The full printed text of this article is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/>. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information or otherwise reserved rights, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. For all other imagery and graphics in this article, or for any other enquires regarding this publication, please contact: Director of Defence Studies (RAF), Cormorant Building (Room 119), Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 8LA.

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCE**
**Centre for Air and
Space Power Studies**

OGL