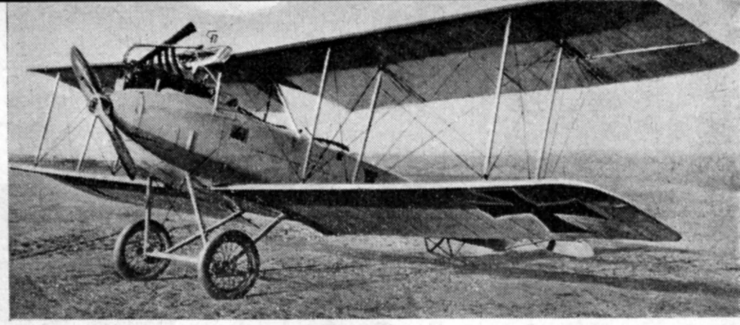
AIRCRAFT DESCRIBED No. 92

Albatros CIII

—by P. L. GRAY



ALBATROS WERKE, founded before the first World War by Dr. Walter Huth was one of the most prolific builders of aircraft for the German Army. Its famous single-seaters from DI to DVa held an almost complete monopoly for equipping the Jagdstaffeln from 1916 until superseded by the Fokker DVII in 1918. What is not quite so well-known is that the firm produced an even longer sequence of 2-seater General Purpose aircraft in the series CI to CXV from 1915 to 1918, many of which were produced in considerable numbers.

The 160 h.p. Mercedes powered CIII (150 Benz version was not widely used operationally) was produced in far greater numbers than any other Albatros 2-seater, being built by the parent firm at Johannisthal, its subsidiary at Schneidermuhl and by many sub-contractors.

The majority of Germany offensive work was undertaken by the 2-seaters on bombing and photographic sorties over allied territory (the single-seaters being mainly used as interceptors over their own terrain) and their crews attained a high degree of combat efficiency commanding no little respect from the pilots of the R.F.C. who tried to shoot them down. Both Mannock and McCudden testify as to what wily birds these two-seaters were and how difficult it was to record a decisive victory over them.

The hallmark of all Albatros aircraft was the three-ply covered fuselage which dispensed with any internal bracing yet produced an extremely strong and rugged structure. In the CIII the fuselage was of normal slabsided shape with a slightly rounded top decking and tapered to a horizontal knife-edge aft. The nose was unspinnered of streamlined with somewhat bulbous metal cowlings retained by spring clips.

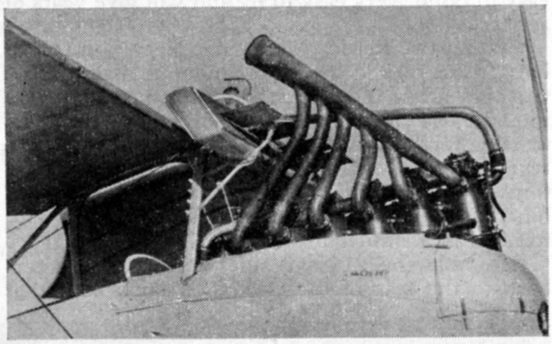
Wings were or orthodox fabric-covered wooden construction, built on two hollow spars, with a false rib reaching aft to the second spar between each of the main ribs. The forward position of the spars imparted a liberal degree of flexibility to the rear half of the wings which considerably improved lateral stability.

All struts were of streamlined steel tube which included the trestle type centre section and the normal Vee type undercarriage struts. An Albatros "hockey stick" tailskid was mounted externally on an inverted pylon of four small struts. Wheels were sprung with elastic shock cord round the axle.

Complete empennage was a steel tube structure of fabric-covered flat plate section. Two lift struts braced the underside of the tailplane and a single cable the top side.

Flying Controls were in the form of a standard short leverage stirrupped rudder-bar and a three-spoked control wheel. Throttle ratchet was on port side of cockpit and was so arranged that on failure the engine went to full throttle and did not stop, as on British types. Some degree of control with the magneto switch was then still possible. Altimeter revolution counter, fuel pressure, and temperature gauges as well as the Bosche magneto switches were part of the cockpit equipment. The compass was usually inverted in the centre section or buried in the starboard lower wing root. A fixed forward firing machine gun, mounted alongside the cylinders on the starboard side did not become standard equipment until well into 1916.

The CIII was operational against the R.F.C. until the close of 1916 by which time it was being replaced with the CV and later, the CVII. It was still widely used for training up to the end of the war—and relegated to lesser theatres of war.



Heading shows a CIII without wheel covers and claw brakes, and with natural finish colouring. Above: the exhaust ducting of a Linke-Hofmann built CIII, and the radiator situation hardly provide a good outlook for the pilot. Left: a losenge fabric covered CIII, S/N CIII 4003/17. All photographs by courtesy of A. R. Weyl