



***War Over The Trenches by E. R. Hooton;
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***Ian Allan,
hardcover, 352 pages, illustrated.***

This book is subtitled Air Power and the Western Front Campaigns 1916-1918 and I believe that it can lay claim to having more facts inside its covers than any other volume dealing with the subject. The author has done a marvellous job in assembling and distilling information that shows how first one side, then the other, achieved aerial supremacy, and what they then did with it.

There are lots of tables showing aircraft of various types at the front at different times during the period in question, sorties flown, aircraft lost, etc. All the information is related to the battles on the ground, so we can see the contribution of the airmen to Verdun, the Somme, Arras, Third Ypres and the battles of 1918. Nothing seems to have been overlooked. It isn't the easiest book to digest, but it is well worth the effort. Things that might come as minor surprises to some readers is the overall strength of the French air service, and how much of the German effort was channelled into the Schlachtstaffeln (ground attack units).

I found the book most informative, though it is a pity that some incidents weren't expanded upon: I was particularly intrigued by mention of a German AEG crew who came down behind the French lines, but were able to persuade some poilus that they were Americans before assisting the enemy to become airborne again!

In essence, War Over the Trenches is a valuable contribution to the history of the war in the air, but it isn't a quick read. Gareth Morgan