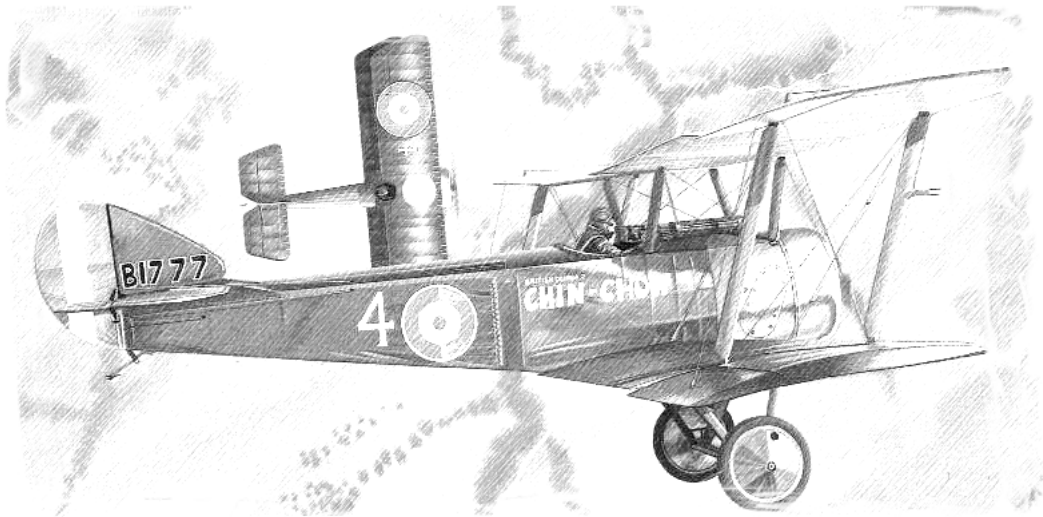


Flying and Air Fighting in the
SOPWITH 'PUP'
Over Flanders' Fields

A Guide for New Pilots

By

2nd Lt. Duncan Eric Jarvis, AIF, attached No. 46 Sqn. RFC,



Quick Rating to Fly: Easy+

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to share No. 46 Sqn.'s collective experience of the single-seater Sopwith Scout (better known by its affectionate nickname - the 'Pup') with blokes who are just transferring to them from Nieuport 12s, Moranes or R.A.F. BE2s. The change from a reconnaissance machine to a scout needs a different way of thinking and there are things you can do with this beautifully responsive little machine that you'd not even consider with a Parasol or a Quirk. This guide will cover the general characteristics of the machine; her strengths and weaknesses; things to watch out for taking off and landing and how to manoeuvre and use the Pup in air and ground combat. Now, this author does not claim to be the definitive expert on the Pup (and all pilots have a slightly different viewpoint on any machine in Over Flanders' Fields in any case) so hopefully some other fellows can add stuff, qualify what's laid out here or, if needs be, shout it down as just plain dud.

By the way, everything written below assumes that your crate is still exactly as she came out of the Sopwith Works. That is to say, your base wallahs haven't worked any wonders in that magical workshop of theirs to make your crate stronger or your guns more powerful or any of that sort of malarkey.

General Characteristics

Well mates, simply put, the Pup is fair dinkum. She's an utter delight to fly and pretty nearly vice-free. So much so, that there ain't much to say by way of advice flying her - except for scrapping or just split-arsing for fun (renversements, flick rolls, hammerheads, loops, spins, stall turns etc. - she loves them all). If you can't fly a Pup you should think of hanging up your goggles and if you prang a Pup without the excuse of being damaged, you'd best throw the flopping things away!

The Pup is a rotary engine scout, but unlike others of that type she produces barely any torque, hardly enough to pull you half a degree to starboard on take-off. She's a little tail-heavy meaning a bit of forward pressure on the stick if you insist on level flight. However, being as she will happily maintain 3 to 4 degrees of climb, full throttle, hands-off, 'til kingdom come, this author inclines to letting her have her head and climb. Stewth! You'll wake up anyway when it gets too taters, and find that she's levelled off at a bit under 18000 ft while you were sleeping!

The Pup is one of the best behaved machines you can fly but, unlike the 'Stable Mabel' Quirk, the Pup is manoeuvrable. She'll easily turn twice to a D.II's once, especially at 15000 ft or above and can happily circle in a steep bank for ages without losing height if she's given a little top rudder. Her elevator area is large and she is a lightweight bird, giving her a huge responsiveness in a turning fight. That said, it's also true that steep, high speed dives aren't favourite. Mind you, if you can stay up all day circling and climbing while Fritz is playing yo-yo down below trying to get his airspeed back, then why would you want to dive steeply anyway?

Pre-flight and Take-off

As noted above, the Pup's engine produces very little torque so you're best leaving the rudder be when taking off. On 'Contact' the Pup will give a little shake, like a thoroughbred flexing its muscles, but there's no dip of the planes, nor any violent swing to left or right. Throttle up and roll but pay attention and pull back slightly on the stick as her tail comes up - it'll come up bloody toot sweet and she could nose over if you've left the elevators on the droop. 'Wheels off' and she is in her element. Let her speed pick up before you angle up too much, but, to be honest, she's very hard to stall and lose control of unless your flying is completely chronic.

Normal Flight

If you bring the Pup's nose up until you just lose sight of the horizon (assuming 'normal' sitting position) she'll ease into a steady climb of around 13 degrees at 55-60 mph. Smidge of port rudder to keep her straight and you can settle down to look through those saucy French postcards you bought on your last leave. The Pup can climb more aggressively if you like - 15 to 18 degrees - but you'll need to manage her more actively. You can, of course, have your rigger trim that port rudder for you, in which case you just need to put her nose on course and she'll

practically fly herself because her natural tendency is for a shallow climb. She's a lovely craft for navigating too, so well-behaved hands-off that you can lean out every which way to check your pozzie.

Combat (Air)

She won't fight by herself, though. Nor will she stop you getting pounced on, so, contrary to the joking above: KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED! Since 'Bloody April' - when anything built by Richthofen's Allied Friends was being shot out of the sky by those flopping Albatri - we've achieved a bit of parity, but there are still bags of Huns in the Arras sector. It's a bit of a cow, but you'll be doing the Pup and yourself a huge favour if you can climb to 10000 ft over your field and then 15000 ft by the time you approach the Lines. It'll be half an hour well spent, because the Pup likes clean air to fight in, not the mucky stuff near the ground, plus you've a better chance of spotting Fritz the higher you get.

Now, one thing you can't do in a Pup is chase Huns. You can hunt them, certainly, but if they're distant and flying away, you're unlikely to catch them before they get a dekko at you and dive away. Them Fritz birds are all a bit hefty, therefore faster in the dive and you'll waste bullets shooting from a distance. Now, when you do get into combat, if you're 'on the velvet' - which is to say, you've got the advantage - then try not to lose it through over-excitement. Against D.IIs and D.IIIIs you've only the one 500 round Vickers to the Hun's twin 500 round Spandaus which means pound-for-pound he has twice the damage-dealing capacity you do and half the worry about missing the shot. Fokkers and Halberstadts are easier prey, of course, but as rare as hen's teeth these days. Whatever the foe though, you should always get in close. The Pup remains responsive at really low speed, so you've no excuse for not making every shot count. If you don't clobber him with your first burst, then Fritz will dive and zoom and you'll have lost the advantage and be into the same turning fight that you'd have been in if Fritz had started with the better hand instead. You should still win, of course, even against two or three of the bastards - just keep turning aggressively into the buggers; keep your altitude or better it; pick your shot when they're nose-up and slow at the top of a zoom and keep a dekko on your tail. If the rough house is turning into a bit of a country dance, don't be afraid to use one of the Huns' dives to get a bit of distance. No Fritz will be able to stay on your tail even if he tries so, barring a gutzer long-shot, you can clear some space and go back in on your terms.

Combat (Ground)

This is a waste of ammunition that is better directed at the Hun in the air. If you've some bullets to use up on your way home, the Pup's manoeuvrability makes for very good strafing, but you've not the firepower to do more damage than you're likely to take, making the whole business a gawk act. Avoid ground attack, by preference.

Landing

Unless the weather's a bit arsy tarsy, no careful line up is necessary with the Pup. You can swank in above the 'field from any angle and bank hard onto your

approach just above the trees. Chop the throttle, drop low, slow and level and you can sink her onto a tennis court. No joke - it's been done! Even a Shiela could land a Pup, almost.

Advanced Tactics

A generic piece of 'advanced' advice to be given about the Pup is to fly her aggressively. She's so well-behaved that the natural tendency is to fly her within bounds but there are advantages to be gained by pushing her limits. For instance, if you're turning after a Hun but you get in too close, pull the Pup's nose up hard so he passes under you, apply full throttle and kick hard opposite rudder to the turn so that you flick roll back onto his tail.

This is a tricky one but, remember the caution about not chasing a Hun because they're all faster in the dive? Well, if you're already on the tail of one but he's drawing away, push the Pup's nose down and catch Fritz up in a shallow dive, staying in his blind spot until his tailplanes are directly ahead and above, about 10 ft away. Pull up hard maybe 60 degrees and almost immediately push the stick hard forward again. If you time it right the Pup will seem to float up past the Hun's tail, sort of 'hinged' by her nose. You can put a steady stream of bullets into the Hun as you come up, through the level and point down again from above him. Plus, even if you didn't finish him off, you're now in position to start again.

Final Note

A bloke might be forgiven for thinking that this author finds no fault with the Pup at all. That's not quite the dinkum oil. She's underpowered and under-armed. Also, the chord of the planes is too wide so you can't get a proper dekkko downward. Narrower planes would be better but that of course would reduce lift, so you'd need a third. Three narrow planes, a more powerful engine and an extra gun and she would be bonzer.

Statistics

Crew: one

Length: 19 ft 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (5.89 m)

Wingspan: 26 ft 6 in (8.08 m)

Height: 9 ft 5 in (2.87 m)

Wing area: 254 ft² (23.6 m²)

Empty weight: 787 lb (358 kg)

Loaded weight: 1,225 lb (557 kg)

Powerplant: 1× Le Rhône air-cooled rotary engine, 80 hp (60 kW)

Maximum speed: 97 knots (111 $\frac{1}{2}$ mph, 180 km/h) at sea level

Service ceiling: 17,500 feet (5,600 m)

Endurance: 3 hours

Climb to 10,000 ft (3,050 m): 14 min

Climb to 16,100 ft (4,910 m): 35 min

Armament: 1 × .303 in (7.7 mm) Vickers machine gun fired forward through the propeller by means of a gun synchronizer