

= Albert Ball =

Albert Ball , VC , DSO & Two Bars , MC (14 August 1896 ? 7 May 1917) was an English fighter pilot during the First World War . At the time of his death he was the United Kingdom 's leading flying ace , with 44 victories , and remained its fourth @-@ highest scorer behind Edward Mannock , James McCudden , and George McElroy .

Raised in Nottingham , Ball joined the Sherwood Foresters at the outbreak of the First World War and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October 1914 . He transferred to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) the following year , and gained his pilot 's wings on 26 January 1916 . Joining No. 13 Squadron RFC in France , he flew reconnaissance missions before being posted in May to No. 11 Squadron , a fighter unit . From then until his return to England on leave in October , he accrued many aerial victories , earning two Distinguished Service Orders and the Military Cross . He was the first ace to become a British national hero .

After a period on home establishment , Ball was posted to No. 56 Squadron , which deployed to the Western Front in April 1917 . He crashed to his death in a field in France on 7 May , sparking a wave of national mourning and posthumous recognition , which included the award of the Victoria Cross for his actions during his final tour of duty . The famous German flying ace Manfred von Richthofen , remarked upon hearing of Ball 's death that he was " by far the best English flying man " .

= = Early life and education = =

Albert Ball was born on 14 August 1896 at 301 Lenton Boulevard in Lenton , Nottingham . After a series of moves throughout the area , his family settled at Sedgley , 43 Lenton Road . His parents were Albert Ball , a successful businessman who rose from employment as a plumber to become Lord Mayor of Nottingham , and who was later knighted , and Harriett Mary Page . Young Albert had two siblings , a brother and a sister . His parents were considered loving and indulgent . In his youth , Ball had a small hut behind the family house where he tinkered with engines and electrical equipment . He was raised with a knowledge of firearms , and conducted target practice in Sedgley 's gardens . Possessed of keen vision , he soon became a crack shot . He was also deeply religious . This did not curb his daring in such boyhood pursuits as steeplejacking ; on his 16th birthday , he accompanied a local workman to the top of a tall factory chimney and strolled about unconcerned by the height .

Ball studied at the Lenton Church School , Grantham Grammar School and Nottingham High School before transferring to Trent College in January 1911 , at the age of 14 . As a student he displayed only average ability , but was able to develop his curiosity for things mechanical . His best subjects were carpentry , modelling , violin and photography . He also served in the Officers ' Training Corps . When Albert left school in December 1913 , aged 17 , his father helped him gain employment at Universal Engineering Works near the family home .

= = First World War = =

= = = Initial war service = = =

Following the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 , Ball enlisted in the British Army , joining the 2 / 7th (Robin Hood) Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) . Soon promoted to sergeant , he gained his commission as a second lieutenant on 29 October . He was assigned to training recruits , but this rear @-@ echelon role irked him . In an attempt to see action , he transferred early the following year to the North Midlands Cyclist Company , Divisional Mounted Troops , but remained confined to a posting in England . On 24 February 1915 , he wrote to his parents , " I have just sent five boys to France , and I hear that they will be in the firing line on Monday . It is just my luck to be unable to go . "

In March 1915 , Ball began a short @-@ lived engagement to Dot Allbourne (or Ellbourne) , though he was still interested in other girls such as Thelma Starr . In June , he decided to take private flying lessons at Hendon Aerodrome , which would give him an outlet for his interest in engineering and possibly help him to see action in France sooner . He paid to undertake pilot training in his own time at the Ruffy @-@ Baumann School , which charged £ 75 to £ 100 for instruction (£ 5 @,@ 580 to £ 7 @,@ 440 in 2010 prices) .

Ball would wake at 3 : 00 am to ride his motorcycle to Ruffy @-@ Baumann for flying practice at dawn , before beginning his daily military duty at 6 : 45 am . His training at Ruffy @-@ Baumann was not unique ; Edwin Cole was learning to fly there at the same time . In letters home Ball recorded that he found flying " great sport " , and displayed what Peter de la Billière described as " almost brutal " detachment regarding accidents suffered by his fellow trainees :

Yesterday a ripping boy had a smash , and when we got up to him he was nearly dead , he had a two @-@ inch piece of wood right through his head and died this morning . If you would like a flight I should be pleased to take you any time you wish .

= = = Military flight training and reconnaissance work = = =

Although considered an average pilot at best by his instructors , Ball qualified for his Royal Aero Club certificate (no . 1898) on 15 October 1915 , and promptly requested transfer to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) . He was seconded to No. 9 (Reserve) Squadron RFC on 23 October , and trained at Mousehold Heath aerodrome near Norwich . In the first week of December , he soloed in a Maurice Farman Longhorn after standing duty all night , and his touchdown was rough . When his instructor commented sarcastically on the landing , Ball angrily exclaimed that he had only 15 minutes experience in the plane , and that if this was the best instruction he was going to get , he would rather return to his old unit . The instructor relented , and Ball then soloed again and landed successfully in five consecutive flights . His rough landing was not the last Ball was involved in ; he survived two others . He completed his training at Central Flying School , Upavon , and was awarded his wings on 22 January 1916 . A week later , he was officially transferred from the North Midlands Cyclist Company to the RFC as a pilot .

On 18 February 1916 , Ball joined No. 13 Squadron RFC at Marieux in France , flying a two @-@ seat Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c on reconnaissance missions . He survived being shot down by anti @-@ aircraft fire on 27 March . Three days later , he fought the first of several combats in the B.E.2 ; he and his observer , Lieutenant S. A. Villiers , fired a drum and a half of Lewis gun ammunition at an enemy two @-@ seater , but were driven off by a second one . After this inconclusive skirmish , Ball wrote home in one of his many letters , " I like this job , but nerves do not last long , and you soon want a rest " . In letters home to his father , he discouraged the idea of his younger brother following him into the RFC . Ball and Villiers tried unsuccessfully to shoot down an enemy observation balloon in their two @-@ seater on 10 April . Ball 's burgeoning skills and aggressiveness gained him access to the squadron 's single @-@ seat Bristol Scout fighter later that month . April 1916 also saw Ball 's first mention in a letter home of plans for " a most wonderful machine ... heaps better than the Hun Fokker " . It is now generally believed that these " plans " were unconnected with the design of the Austin @-@ Ball A.F.B.1 , with which he later became involved .

= = = Initial fighter posting = = =

On 7 May 1916 , Ball was posted to No. 11 Squadron , which operated a mix of fighters including Bristol Scouts , Nieuport 16s , and Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2b " pushers " . After his first day of flying with his new unit , he wrote a letter home complaining about fatigue . He was unhappy with the hygiene of his assigned billet in the nearest village , and elected to live in a tent on the flight line . Ball built a hut for himself to replace the tent and cultivated a garden .

Throughout his flying service Ball was primarily a " lone @-@ wolf " pilot , stalking his prey from below until he drew close enough to use his top @-@ wing Lewis gun on its Foster mounting ,

angled to fire upwards into the enemy 's fuselage . According to fellow ace and Victoria Cross recipient James McCudden , " it was quite a work of art to pull this gun down and shoot upwards , and at the same time manage one 's machine accurately " . Ball was as much a loner on the ground as in the air , preferring to stay in his hut on the flight line away from other squadron members . His off @-@ duty hours were spent tending his small garden and practising the violin . Though not unsociable per se , he was extremely sensitive and shy . Ball acted as his own mechanic on his aircraft and , as a consequence , was often untidy and dishevelled . His singularity in dress extended to his habit of flying without a helmet and goggles , and he wore his thick black hair longer than regulations generally permitted .

While flying a Bristol Scout on 16 May 1916 , Ball scored his first aerial victory , driving down a German reconnaissance plane . He then switched to Nieuports , bringing down two LVGs on 29 May and a Fokker Eindecker on 1 June . On 25 June he became a balloon buster and an ace by destroying an observation balloon with phosphor bombs . During the month he had written to his parents admonishing them to try and " take it well " if he was killed , " for men tons better than I go in hundreds every day " . He again achieved two victories in one sortie on 2 July , shooting down a Roland C.II and an Aviatik to bring his score to seven .

Ball then requested a few days off but , to his dismay , was temporarily reassigned to aerial reconnaissance duty with No. 8 Squadron , where he flew B.E.2s from 18 July until 14 August . During this posting , Ball undertook an unusual mission . On the evening of 28 July , he flew a French espionage agent across enemy lines . Dodging an attack by three German fighters , as well as anti @-@ aircraft fire , he landed in a deserted field , only to find that the agent refused to get out of the aircraft . While he was on reconnaissance duties with No. 8 Squadron , the London Gazette announced that he had been awarded the Military Cross " for conspicuous skill and gallantry on many occasions , " particularly for " one occasion [when] he attacked six in one flight " . This was not unusual ; throughout his career , Ball generally attacked on sight and heedless of the odds . He professed no hatred for his opponents , writing to his parents " I only scrap because it is my duty ... Nothing makes me feel more rotten than to see them go down , but you see it is either them or me , so I must do my duty best to make it a case of them " .

Ball 's 20th birthday was marked by his promotion to temporary captain and his return to No. 11 Squadron . He destroyed three Roland C.IIs in one sortie on 22 August 1916 , the first RFC pilot to do so . He ended the day by fighting 14 Germans some 15 miles (24 km) behind their lines . With his plane badly damaged and out of fuel , he struggled back to Allied lines to land . He transferred with part of No. 11 Squadron to No. 60 Squadron RFC on 23 August . His new commanding officer gave Ball a free rein to fly solo missions , and assigned him his own personal aircraft and maintenance crew . One of the squadron mechanics painted up a non @-@ standard red propeller boss ; A201 became the first of a series of Ball 's aeroplanes to have such a colour scheme . He found that it helped his fellow squadron members identify his plane and confirm his combat claims . By end of the month , he had increased his tally to 17 enemy aircraft , including three on 28 August .

Ball then took leave in England . His feats in France had received considerable publicity . He was the first British ace to become a household name , and found that his celebrity was such that he could not walk down the streets of Nottingham without being stopped and congratulated . Prior to this the British government had suppressed the names of its aces ? in contrast to the policy of the French and Germans ? but the losses of the Battle of the Somme , which had commenced in July , made politic the publicising of its successes in the air . Ball 's achievements had a profound impact on budding flyer Mick Mannock , who would become the United Kingdom 's top @-@ scoring ace and also receive the Victoria Cross .

Upon return to No. 60 Squadron in France , Ball scored morning and evening victories on 15 September , flying two different Nieuports . On the evening mission , he armed his plane with eight Le Prieur rockets on the outer struts , set to fire electrically . He intended to use them on an observation balloon . As it happened , he spotted three German Roland C.IIs and broke their formation by salvoing his rockets at them , then picked off one of the confused pilots with machine @-@ gun fire . After this he settled into an improved aeroplane , Nieuport 17 no . A213 . He had it

rigged to fly tail @-@ heavy to facilitate his changing of ammunition drums in the machine @-@ gun , and had a holster built into the cockpit for the Colt automatic that he habitually carried . Three times during September he scored triple victories in a day , ending the month with his total score standing at 31 , making him Britain 's top @-@ scoring ace . By this time he had told his commanding officer that he had to have a rest and that he was taking unnecessary risks because of his nerves . On 3 October , he was sent on leave , en route to a posting at the Home Establishment in England . A French semi @-@ official report of Ball 's successes was issued the same day ; it was picked up and repeated in the British aviation journal Flight nine days later .

= = = Home front = = =

Ball had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and bar simultaneously on 26 September 1916 . The first award was " for conspicuous gallantry and skill " when he took on two enemy formations . The bar was also " for conspicuous skill and gallantry " when he attacked four enemy aircraft in formation and then , on another occasion , 12 enemy machines . He was awarded the Russian Order of St. George the same month . Now that Ball had been posted back to England , he was lionised as a national hero with a reputation as a fearless pilot and expert marksman . A crowd of journalists awaited him on his family 's doorstep . In an interview , he mentioned being downed six times in combat . On 18 November , he was invested with his Military Cross and both DSOs by King George V at Buckingham Palace . A second bar to the DSO , for taking on three enemy aircraft and shooting one down , followed on 25 November , making him the first three @-@ time recipient of the award . Ball was promoted to the substantive rank of lieutenant on 8 December 1916 .

Instead of returning to combat after his leave , Ball was posted to instructional duties with No. 34 (Reserve) Squadron RFC , based at Orford Ness , Suffolk . It was while serving on the home front that he was able to lobby for the building and testing of the Austin @-@ Ball A.F.B.1 fighter . He hoped to be able to take an example of the type to France with him , but the prototype was not completed until after his death in action . In November he was invited to test fly the prototype of the new Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5 scout (single @-@ seat fighter) , apparently the first service pilot to do so . He was unimpressed , finding the heavier , more stable fighter less responsive to the controls than the Nieuports he was used to . His negative assessment of other aspects of the S.E. ' s performance , on the other hand , contrasted markedly with the reactions of fellow pilots who tested the prototype about this time . Ball was to maintain his opinion of the S.E. as a " dud " , at least until he had scored several victories on the type after his return to France .

On 19 February 1917 , in a tribute from his native city , Ball became an Honorary Freeman of Nottingham . Around this time he met James McCudden , also on leave , who later reported his impressions in most favourable terms . In London , Ball also encountered Canadian pilot Billy Bishop , who had not as yet seen combat . He immediately liked Bishop , and may have helped the latter secure a posting to No. 60 Squadron . On 25 March , while off @-@ duty , Ball met 18 @-@ year @-@ old Flora Young . He impulsively invited her to fly with him , and she promptly accepted , wearing a leather flying coat that they had borrowed . On 5 April , they became engaged ; she wore his silver identification wrist bracelet in lieu of an engagement ring .

= = = Second fighter posting = = =

Inaction chafed Ball , and he began agitating for a return to combat duty . He finally managed to obtain a posting as a flight commander with No. 56 Squadron RFC , considered to be as close to an elite unit as any established by the RFC . Ball was still first among Britain 's aces , and some documents hint that his attachment to No. 56 Squadron was planned to be temporary . According to one account he had been slated to serve with the unit for only a month to mentor novice pilots .

The latest type from the Royal Aircraft Factory , the S.E.5 , had been selected to equip the new squadron . This choice was viewed with some trepidation by the RFC high command , and Ball himself was personally far from happy with the S.E.5. After some intense lobbying he was allowed to

retain his Nieuport 17 no . B1522 when the unit went to France ; the Nieuport was for his solo missions , and he would fly an S.E.5 on patrols with the rest of the squadron . This arrangement had the personal approval of General Hugh Trenchard , who went on to become the first Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal Air Force . No. 56 Squadron moved to the Western Front on 7 April 1917 . On arrival Ball wrote to his parents , " Cheero , am just about to start the great game again " .

S.E.5 no . A4850 , fresh from its packing crate , was extensively modified for Ball : in particular he had the synchronised Vickers machine gun removed , to be replaced with a second Lewis gun fitted to fire downwards through the floor of the cockpit . He also had a slightly larger fuel tank installed . On 9 April , A4850 was refitted , and the downward @-@ firing Lewis gun removed and replaced by the normal Vickers gun mounting . In a letter to Flora Young on 18 April , Ball mentioned getting his own hut on the flight line , and installing the members of his flight nearby .

On 23 April 1917 , Ball was under strict orders to stay over British lines , but still engaged the Germans five times in his Nieuport . In his first combat that day , using his preferred belly shot , he sent an Albatros into a spin , following it down and continuing to fire at it until it struck the ground . It was No. 56 Squadron 's first victory . Regaining an altitude of 5 @,@ 000 feet (1 @,@ 500 m) , he tried to dive underneath an Albatros two @-@ seater and pop up under its belly as usual , but he overshot , and the German rear gunner put a burst of 15 bullets through the Nieuport 's wings and spars . Ball coaxed the Nieuport home for repairs , returning to battle in an S.E.5. In his third combat of the day , he fired five rounds before his machine gun jammed . After landing to clear the gun , he took off once more , surprising five Albatros fighters and sending one down in flames . His fifth battle , shortly thereafter , appeared inconclusive , as the enemy plane managed to land safely . However , its observer had been mortally wounded .

Three days later , on 26 April , Ball scored another double victory , flying S.E.5 no . A4850 , and one more on 28 April . This last day 's fighting left the S.E.5 so battered by enemy action that it was dismantled and sent away for repair . The following month , despite continual problems with jamming guns in the S.E.5s , Ball shot down seven Albatroses in five days , including two reconnaissance models on 1 May , a reconnaissance plane and an Albatros D.III fighter on 2 May ; a D.III on 4 May , and two D.IIIs the next day , 5 May . The second of these victims nearly rammed Ball as they shot it out in a head @-@ on firing pass . As they sped past one another , Ball was left temporarily blinded by oil spraying from the holed oil tank of his craft . Clearing the oil from his eyes , he flew his S.E.5 home with zero oil pressure in an engine on the brink of seizure . He was so overwrought that it was some time after landing before he could finish thanking God , then dictating his combat report .

While squadron armourers and mechanics repaired the faulty machine @-@ gun synchroniser on his most recent S.E.5 mount , A8898 , Ball had been sporadically flying the Nieuport again , and was successful with it on 6 May , destroying one more Albatros D.III in an evening flight to raise his tally to 44 . He had continued to undertake his habitual lone patrols , but had of late been fortunate to survive . The heavier battle damage that Ball 's aircraft were now suffering bore witness to the improved team tactics being developed by his German opponents . Some time on 6 May , Ball had visited his friend Billy Bishop at the latter 's aerodrome . He proposed that the pair attack the Red Baron 's squadron at its airfield at dawn , catching the German pilots off guard . Bishop agreed to take part in the daring scheme at the end of the month , after he returned from his forthcoming leave . That night , in his last letter to his father , Ball wrote " I do get tired of always living to kill , and am really beginning to feel like a murderer . Shall be so pleased when I have finished " .

= = = Final flight and aftermath = = =

On the evening of 7 May 1917 , near Douai , 11 British aircraft from No. 56 Squadron led by Ball in an S.E.5 encountered German fighters from Jasta 11 . A running dogfight in deteriorating visibility resulted , and the aircraft became scattered . Cecil Arthur Lewis , a participant in this fight , described it in his memoir *Sagittarius Rising* . Ball was last seen by fellow pilots pursuing the red Albatros D.III of the Red Baron 's younger brother , Lothar von Richthofen , who eventually landed near Ann?ullin with a punctured fuel tank . Cyril Crowe observed Ball flying into a dark thundercloud

. A German pilot officer on the ground , Lieutenant Hailer , then saw Ball 's plane falling upside @-@ down from the bottom of the cloud , at an altitude of 200 feet (61 m) , with a dead prop . Brothers Franz and Carl Hailer and the other two men in their party were from a German reconnaissance unit , Flieger @-@ Abteilung A292 . Franz Hailer noted , " It was leaving a cloud of black smoke ... caused by oil leaking into the cylinders . " The engine had to be inverted for this to happen . The Hispano engine was known to flood its inlet manifold with fuel when upside down and then stopped running . Franz Hailer and his three companions hurried to the crash site . Ball was already dead when they arrived . The four German airmen agreed that the crashed craft had suffered no battle damage . No bullet wounds were found on Ball 's body , even though Hailer went through Ball 's clothing to find identification . Hailer also took Ball to a field hospital . A German doctor subsequently described a broken back and a crushed chest , along with fractured limbs , as the cause of death .

The Germans credited Richthofen with shooting down Ball , but there is some doubt as to what happened , especially as Richthofen 's claim was for a Sopwith Triplane , not an S.E.5 , which was a biplane . Given the amount of propaganda the German high command generated touting the younger Richthofen , a high @-@ level decision may have been taken to attribute Ball 's death to him . It is probable that Ball was not shot down at all , but had become disoriented and lost control during his final combat , the victim of a form of temporary vertigo that has claimed other pilots . Ball 's squadron harboured hopes that he was a prisoner of war , and the British government officially listed him as " missing " on 18 May . There was much speculation in the press ; in France , the Havas news agency reported : " Albert Ball , the star of aviators ... has been missing since the 7th May . Is he a prisoner or has he been killed ? If he is dead , he died fighting for his forty @-@ fifth victory . " It was only at the end of the month that the Germans dropped messages behind Allied lines announcing that Ball was dead , and had been buried in Annoeullin with full military honours two days after he crashed . Over the grave of the man they dubbed " the English Richthofen " , the Germans erected a cross bearing the inscription In Luftkampf gefallen für sein Vaterland Engl . Flieger Hauptmann Albert Ball , Royal Flying Corps (" Fallen in air combat for his fatherland English pilot Captain Albert Ball ") .

Ball 's death was reported world @-@ wide in the press . He was lauded as the " wonder boy of the Flying Corps " in Britain 's Weekly Dispatch , the " Ace of English Aces " in Portugal , the " heroic aviator " in South America , and the " super @-@ airman " in France . On 7 June 1917 , the London Gazette announced that he had received the Croix de Chevalier , Legion d 'Honneur from the French government . The following day , he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his " most conspicuous and consistent bravery " in action from 25 April to 6 May 1917 . On 10 June 1917 , a memorial service was held for Ball in the centre of Nottingham at St Mary 's Church , with large crowds paying tribute as the procession of mourners passed by . Among those attending were Ball 's father Albert , Sr. and brother Cyril , now also a pilot in the RFC ; his mother Harriett , overwhelmed with grief , was not present . Ball was posthumously promoted to captain on 15 June . His Victoria Cross was presented to his parents by King George V on 22 July 1917 . The following year he was awarded a special medal by the Aero Club of America .

= = = Posthumous tributes = = =

In 1918 , Walter A. Briscoe and H. Russell Stannard released a seminal biography , Captain Ball VC , reprinting many of Ball 's letters and prefaced with encomiums by Prime Minister David Lloyd George , Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig , and Major General Sir Hugh Trenchard . Lloyd George wrote that " What he says in one of his letters , ' I hate this game , but it is the only thing one must do just now ' , represents , I believe , the conviction of those vast armies who , realising what is at stake , have risked all and endured all that liberty may be saved " . Haig spoke of Ball 's " unrivalled courage " and his " example and incentive to those who have taken up his work " . In Trenchard 's opinion , Ball had " a wonderfully well @-@ balanced brain , and his loss to the Flying Corps was the greatest loss it could sustain at that time " .

In the book proper , Briscoe and Stannard quote Ball 's most notable opponent , Manfred von Richthofen . The Red Baron , who believed in his younger brother 's victory award , considered Ball

" by far the best English flying man " . Elsewhere in the book , an unidentified Royal Flying Corps pilot who flew with Ball in his last engagement was quoted as saying , " I see they have given him the V.C. Of course he won it a dozen times over ? the whole squadron knows that . " The authors themselves described the story of Ball 's life as that of " a young knight of gentle manner who learnt to fly and to kill at a time when all the world was killing ... saddened by the great tragedy that had come into the world and made him a terrible instrument of Death " .

Linda Raine Robertson , in *The Dream of Civilised Warfare* , noted that Briscoe and Stannard emphasised " the portrait of a boy of energy , pluck , and humility , a loner who placed his skill in the service of his nation , fought ? indeed , invited ? a personal war , and paid the ultimate sacrifice as a result " , and that they " struggle to paste the mask of cheerful boyishness over the signs of the toll taken on him by the stress of air combat and the loss of friends " .

Alan Clark , in *Aces High : The War in the Air Over the Western Front* , found Ball the " perfect public schoolboy " with " the enthusiasms and all the eager intelligence of that breed " and that these characteristics , coupled with a lack of worldly maturity , were " the ingredients of a perfect killer , where a smooth transition can be made between the motives that drive a boy to ' play hard ' at school and then to ' fight hard ' against the King 's enemies " . Biographer Chaz Bowyer considered that " to label Albert Ball a ' killer ' would be to do him a grave injustice " , as his " sensitive nature suffered in immediate retrospect whenever he succeeded in combat " .

= = Post @-@ war legacy = =

After the war the British discovered Ball 's grave , which had been behind enemy lines , in the Annoeullin Cemetery . In December 1918 , personnel of No. 207 Squadron RAF erected a new cross in place of the one left by the Germans . The Imperial War Graves Commission (now Commonwealth War Graves Commission) were working at the time to consolidate the British war graves into fewer cemeteries ; 23 British bodies in graves in the location where Ball was buried were moved to the Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery , but at his father 's request Ball 's grave was allowed to remain . Albert Sr. paid for a private memorial to be erected over Ball 's grave , No. 643 , in what later became the Annoeullin Communal Cemetery and German Extension . Ball 's is the only British grave from the First World War in this extension , the rest being German . Ball 's father also bought the French field where his son had died and erected a memorial stone on the crash site .

Memorials to Ball in his native Nottingham include a monument and statue in the grounds of Nottingham Castle . The monument , which was commissioned by the city council and funded by public subscription , consists of a bronze group on a carved pedestal of Portland stone and granite . The bronze group , by the sculptor Henry Poole , shows a life @-@ size figure of Ball with an allegorical female figure at his shoulder . The monument was unveiled on 8 September 1921 by Air Marshal Trenchard , with military honours including a flypast by a squadron of RAF aircraft . In 1929 the bronze model for Ball 's statue was presented by his father to the National Portrait Gallery in London , where it is on display . In further remembrance of his son , Albert Ball , Sr. commissioned the building of the Albert Ball Memorial Homes in Lenton to house the families of local servicemen killed in action . The Lenton War Memorial , located in front of the homes , includes Ball 's name and was also paid for by the Ball family . The homes were Grade @-@ II listed for historic preservation in 1995 .

A memorial to Ball , along with his parents , and a sister who died in infancy , appears on the exterior wall of the southwest corner of Holy Trinity Church in Lenton . Another memorial tablet is present inside the same church , mounted on the north wall and bearing the RFC and RAF motto *Per Ardua ad Astra* , along with decorations of medals and royal arms . In 1967 , the Albert Ball VC Scholarships were instituted at his alma mater , Trent College . A propeller from one of Ball 's aircraft and the original cross from his grave in France are displayed at the college 's library and chapel , respectively . One of the houses at Nottingham High 's Junior School is also named after Ball .

In 2006 , Ball was one of six recipients of the Victoria Cross to be featured on a special commemorative edition of Royal Mail stamps marking the 150th anniversary of the award . His

Victoria Cross is displayed at the Nottingham Castle Museum along with his other medals and memorabilia , including a bullet @-@ holed Avro windshield , a section of engine piping from one of his damaged Nieuports , his Freedom of Nottingham Scroll and Casket , and various letters and other papers . A portrait study by Noel Denholm Davis is in the collection of Nottingham City Museums and Galleries .

= = Award citations = =

Victoria Cross

Lt. (temp . Capt.) Albert Ball , D.S.O. , M.C. , late Notts. and Derby . R. , and R.F.C.

For most conspicuous and consistent bravery from the 25th of April to the 6th of May , 1917 , during which period Capt. Ball took part in twenty @-@ six combats in the air and destroyed eleven hostile aeroplanes , drove down two out of control , and forced several others to land .

In these combats Capt. Ball , flying alone , on one occasion fought six hostile machines , twice he fought five and once four . When leading two other British aeroplanes he attacked an enemy formation of eight . On each of these occasions he brought down at least one enemy .

Several times his aeroplane was badly damaged , once so seriously that but for the most delicate handling his machine would have collapsed , as nearly all the control wires had been shot away . On returning with a damaged machine he had always to be restrained from immediately going out on another .

In all , Capt. Ball has destroyed forty @-@ three German aeroplanes and one balloon , and has always displayed most exceptional courage , determination and skill .

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

For conspicuous gallantry and skill . Observing seven enemy machines in formation , he immediately attacked one of them and shot it down at 15 yards range . The remaining machines retired . Immediately afterwards , seeing five more hostile machines , he attacked one at about 10 yards range and shot it down , flames coming out of the fuselage . He then attacked another of the machines , which had been firing at him , and shot it down into a village , when it landed on the top of a house . He then went to the nearest aerodrome for more ammunition , and , returning , attacked three more machines , causing them to dive under control . Being then short of petrol he came home . His own machine was badly shot about in these fights .

Distinguished Service Order (DSO) Bar

For conspicuous skill and gallantry . When on escort duty to a bombing raid he saw four enemy machines in formation . He dived on to them and broke up their formation , and then shot down the nearest one , which fell on its nose . He came down to about 500 feet to make certain it was wrecked . On another occasion , observing 12 enemy machines in formation , he dived in among them , and fired a drum into the nearest machine , which went down out of control . Several more hostile machines then approached , and he fired three more drums at them , driving down another out of control . He then returned , crossing the lines at a low altitude , with his machine very much damaged .

Distinguished Service Order (DSO) Bar

For conspicuous gallantry in action . He attacked three hostile machines and brought one down , displaying great courage and skill . He has brought down eight hostile machines in a short period , and has forced many others to land .

Military Cross (MC)

For conspicuous skill and gallantry on many occasions , notably when , after failing to destroy an enemy kite balloon with bombs , he returned for a fresh supply , went back and brought it down in flames . He has done great execution among enemy aeroplanes . On one occasion he attacked six in one flight , forced down two and drove the others off . This occurred several miles over the enemy 's lines .

= = List of victories = =

Confirmed victories numbered ; unconfirmed victories marked " u / c " . Except where noted , data from Shores et al .