By this stage of the war in 1914, the major hostilities concerned the Belgian city of Ypres. Antwerp had just fallen to the Germans and the British had fallen back to Ypres, the town that commanded the roads to the channel ports. The Allied salient there (a kink in the defensive line) was attacked by the Germans with their superior artillery in what became known as the first Battle of Ypres.

Captain Theodore Crean who matriculated in 1899, was a career soldier who had served in the West African Campaign. He joined the Royal Flying Corps and was an observer flying over the trenches at Ypres. On the 26th October 1914 he was directing the Allied artillery fire when he was shot down in flames by his own side. The aircraft markings in use by the British in the early days of the war closely resembled those of the Germans and accidents like this led to the adoption of the now-familiar roundels of the RAF.