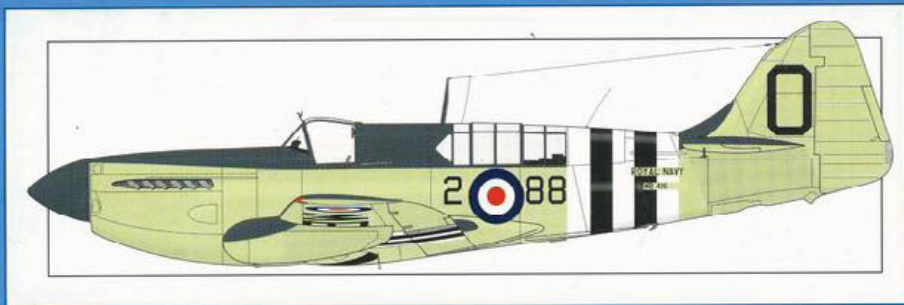




WARPAINT SERIES No.28

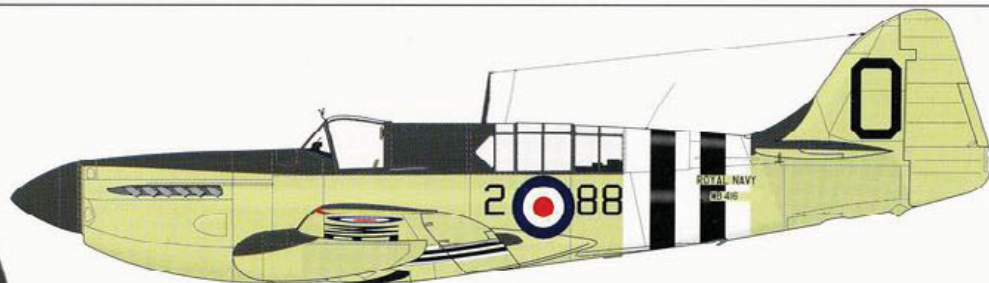
Fairey FIREFLY

F.Mk.1 to U.Mk.9

BY GEOFFREY BUSSY

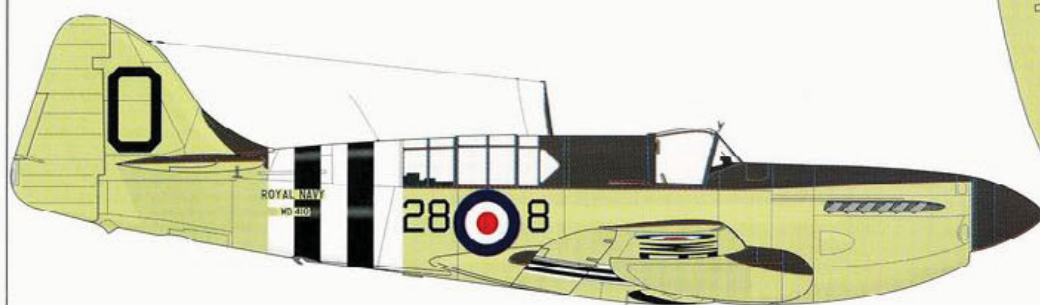
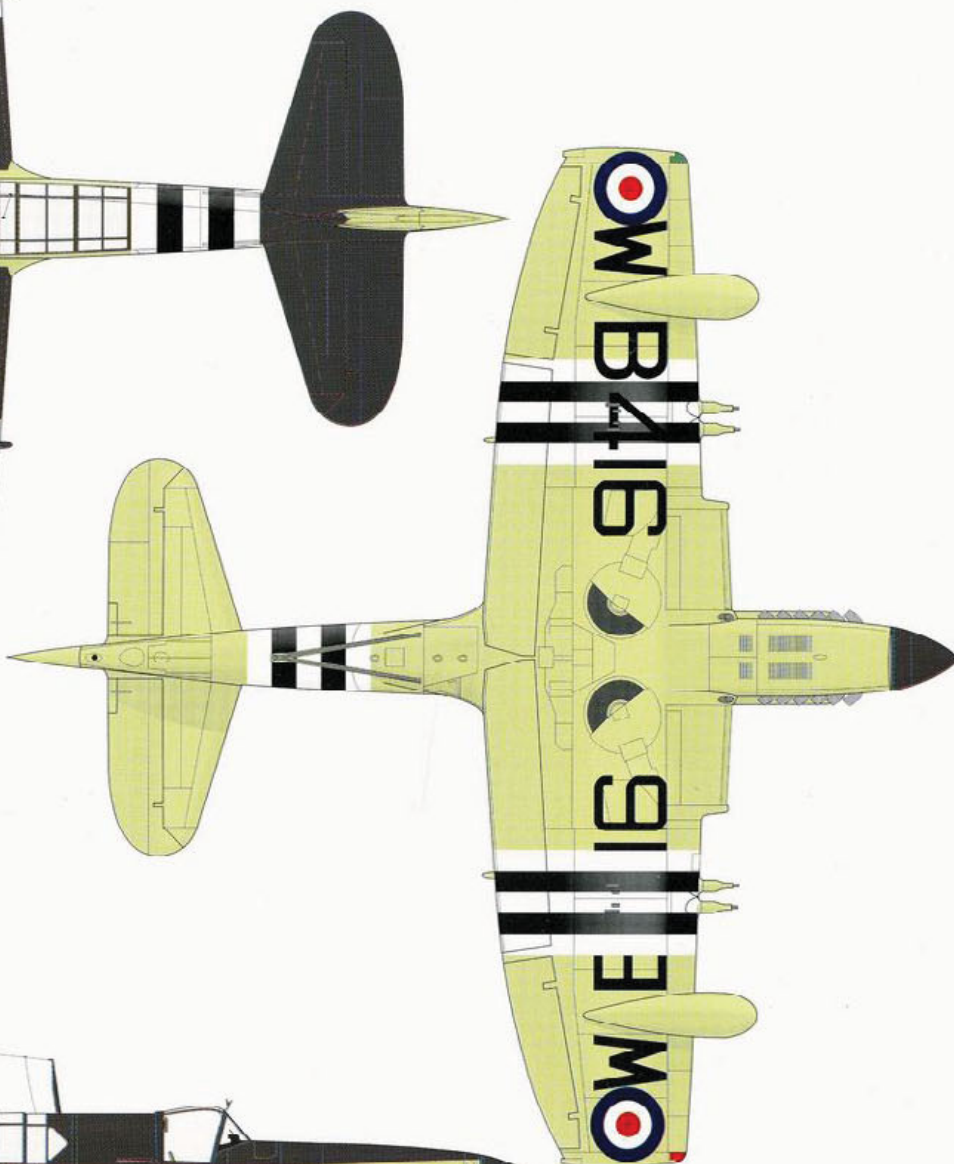
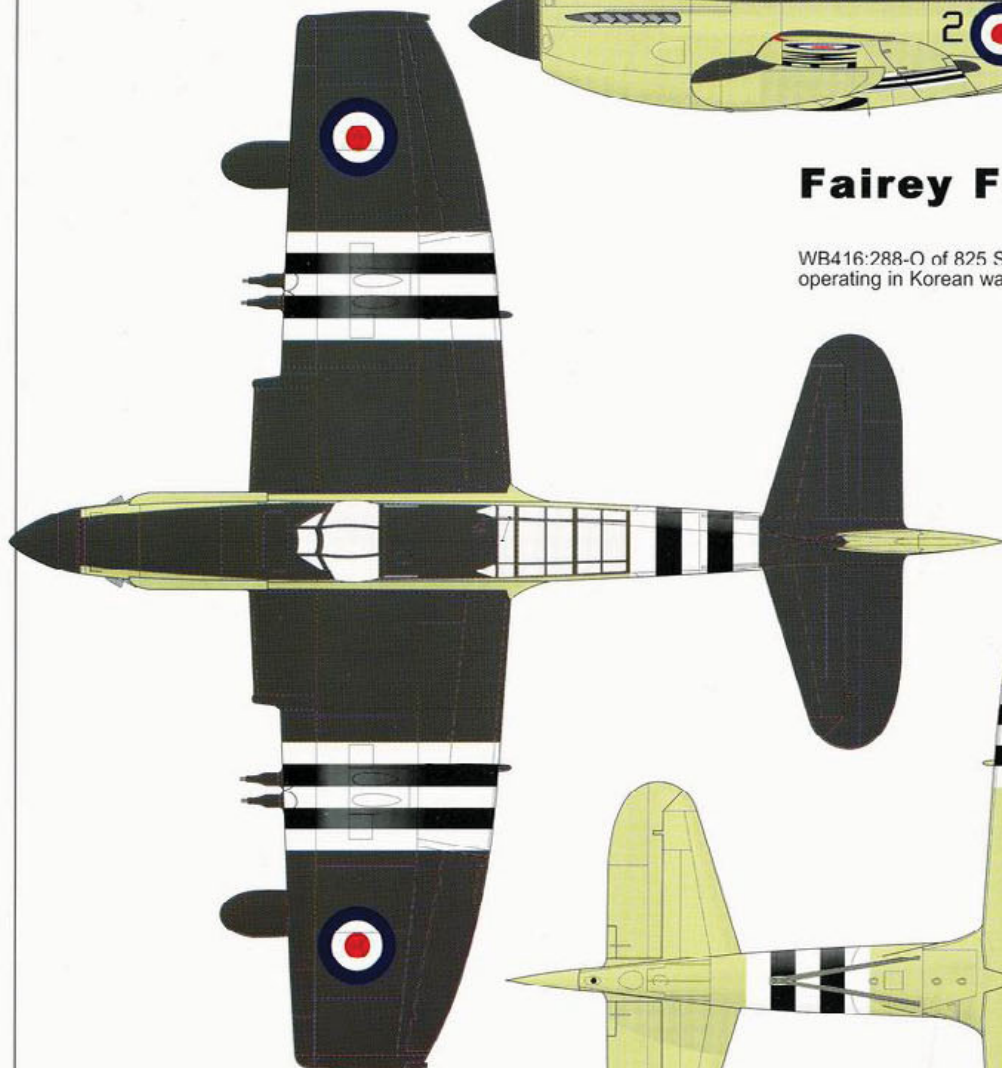
Fairey Firefly F.Mk.1 Z1980 puts on the power before taking off from a carrier deck in the early 1950s judging by the Flight Deck Officer's light blue flying overall, current at the time. The aircraft came from the third batch of 45 Fireflies ordered and was eventually converted into a T.Mk.1



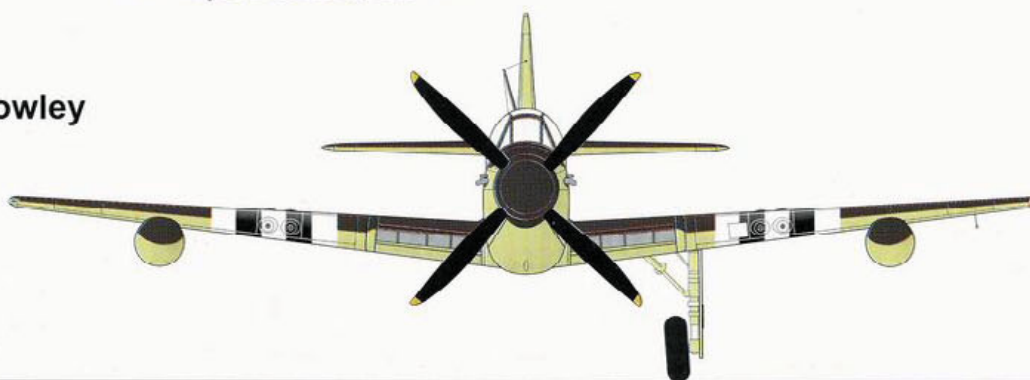


Fairey Firefly FR.Mk.5

WB416:288-O of 825 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, HMS Ocean, operating in Korean waters, 1952.



Drawings by David Howley



By Geoffrey Bussy



Fairey FIREFLY

The Fleet Air Arm concept of a two-seat aircraft combining reconnaissance and fighter roles was first developed during the mid-twenties when the Air Ministry issued a requirement for a carrier-borne fleet spotter with interceptor capability. During the thirties, the Hawker Osprey fulfilled both roles and was partially replaced by the Blackburn Skua in 1938 and the Fairey Fulmar in 1940. By then the reconnaissance role had become less important than the aircraft's fighter capability.

During March 1939, the Air Ministry issued Specification N.8/39 setting out requirements for a two-seat short-range fleet fighter to replace the Gloster Sea Gladiator, Blackburn Skua and Fairey Fulmar. The Admiralty's preference for the dorsal gun turret in its fighters led to the publication of Air Ministry Specification N.9/39 issued

towards the end of 1939. It was a gun turret equivalent of N.8/39. In the light of operational experience during the first months of the war with the RAF's Boulton-Paul Defiant and the FAA's Blackburn Roc, N.9/39 was modified during the following year to exclude the obsolete gun turret concept. So Specification N.5/40 appeared writ-

F.Mk.I to U.Mk.9

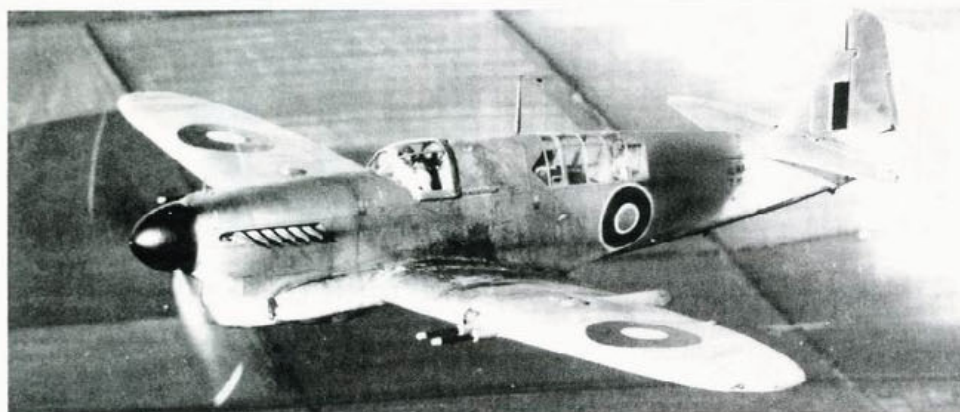
One of the first Firefly F.1s to be fitted with a raised cockpit hood and full cannon fairings, these were only painted in grey. The Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey pattern of the upper surfaces is clearly visible. (RAF Museum)

ten around a proposal by Fairey.

The Fairey design team, headed by chief

The first prototype Firefly, Z1826, showing its large Fairey Youngman flaps. It reached the A&AEE without its cockpit hood having lost it during the flight to Boscombe Down, and was tested in this form. (FAA Museum)





With yellow-painted undersurfaces, Firefly F.1 Z1832 shows that the original fabric covered ailerons have been replaced by metal covered ones. This Firefly was amongst the first aircraft to enter front line service with 1770 Squadron in October 1943. (RAF Museum)



reconnaissance aircraft as early as September 1939. A mock-up had been submitted the next year and was approved by 6 June 1940. Very confident and urged on by the need of the FAA for modern fighters, the Ministry of Aircraft production ordered an initial batch of 200 machines only six days later. Further orders were placed but many changes occurred as production shifted to other marks or due to the end of the war.

Construction of a prototype was undertaken in the experimental shop at Hayes but it finally emerged at the Great West Aerodrome in December 1941, with the serial Z1826. After some ground trials, the maiden flight took place from the manufacturers aerodrome on 22 December 1941, with Chris Staniland at the controls. The testing programme went well with several minor modifications being introduced during spring of 1942. The prototype was then

Above left: Third prototype Firefly Z1828, first flew on 26 August 1942 and was used by A&AEE for performance trials during the second half of that year. It force landed on 7 December following an engine failure but was repaired. Left: Firefly Z1828 was then selected to carry out the first carrier trials conducted on board *HMS Illustrious* in March 1943. It later went to Farnborough for structural tests.

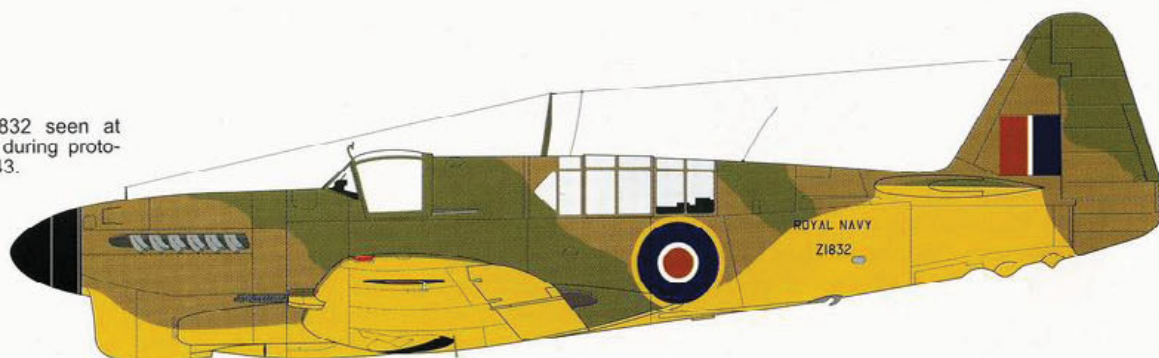
Fairey Firefly camouflage and markings

Drawings by David Howley

FAIREY FIREFLY COLOUR KEY



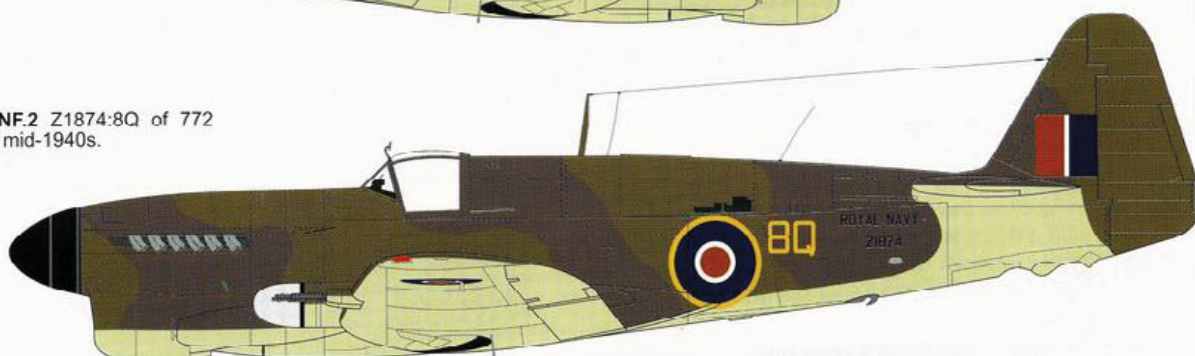
Fairey Firefly FR.1, Z1832 seen at A&AEE Boscombe Down during proto-type trials, July-August 1943.



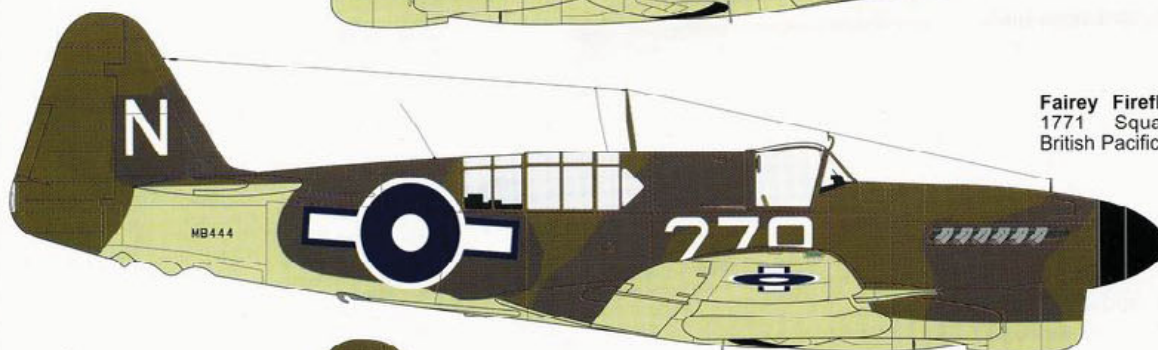
Fairey Firefly F.1 Z2030:Z8M of 790 Squadron, RNAS Zeals in 1945.



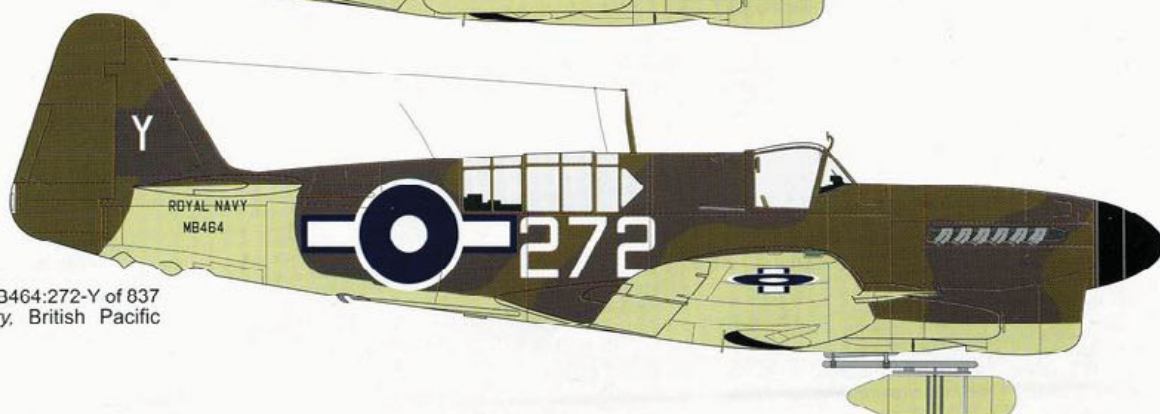
Fairey Firefly NF.2 Z1874:8Q of 772 Squadron in the mid-1940s.

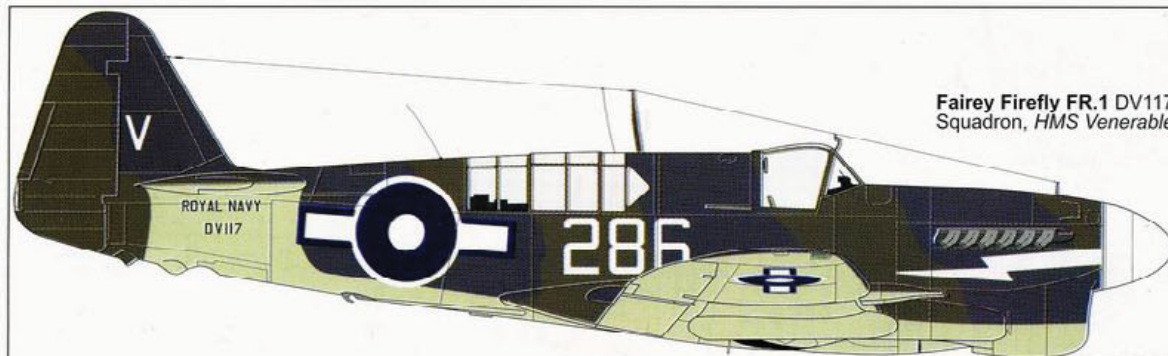


Fairey Firefly FR.1 MB444:278-N of 1771 Squadron, HMS Implacable, British Pacific Fleet mid-1945.



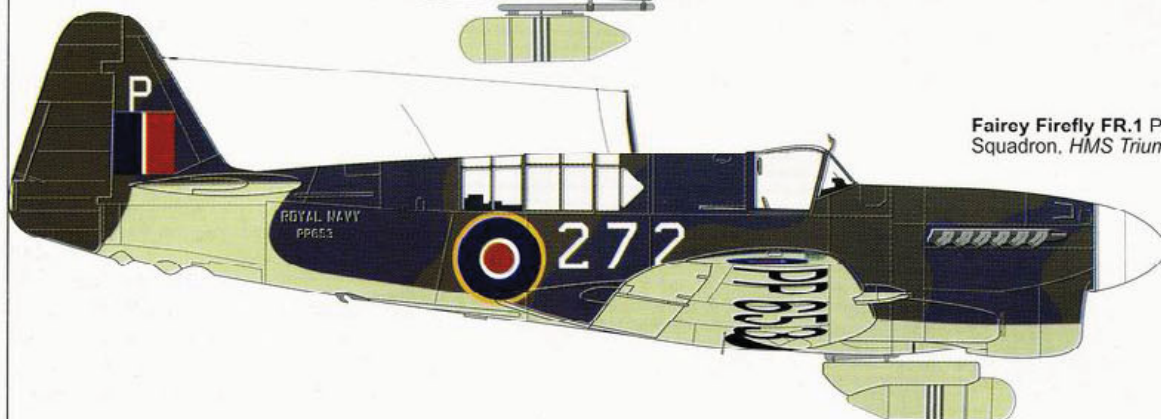
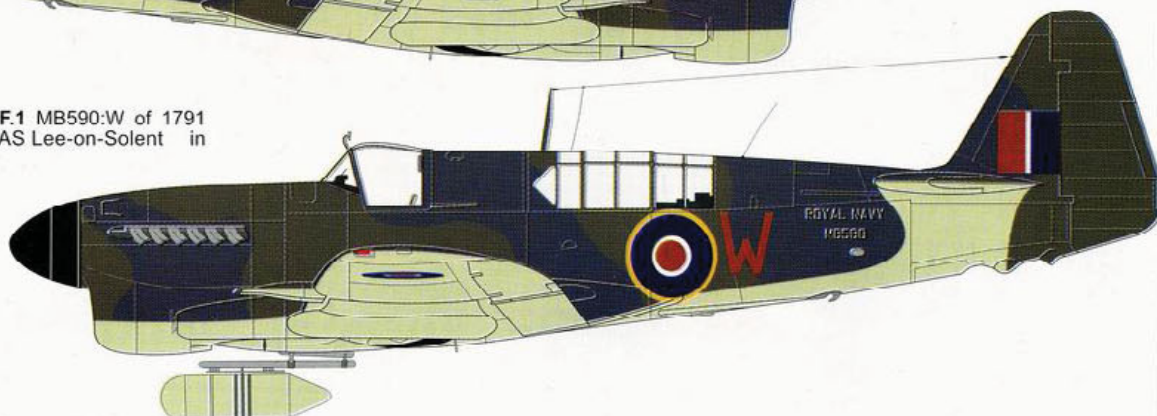
Fairey Firefly FR.1 MB464:272-Y of 837 Squadron, HMS Glory, British Pacific Fleet in 1945.





Fairey Firefly FR.1 DV117:286-V of 814 Squadron, HMS Venerable in 1946.

Fairey Firefly NF.1 MB590:W of 1791 Squadron, RNAS Lee-on-Solent in March 1945.



Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP653:272-P of 827 Squadron, HMS Triumph, in 1947.

designer H.E. Chaplin, had presented its ideas about the concept of the fleet fighters - were introduced by Fairey in May and from June for a four-month programme, including the fitting of a new rudder with a reduced horn balance.

Sadly the chief test pilot was killed on 26 June 1942 whilst flying the second prototype - Z1827 whose maiden flight had taken place on 4 June - as the tail unit collapsed on a low-level flight.

A third prototype, Z1828, had been built and flew on 26 August 1942, followed by a structural test airframe which was given the serial Z1929 and was delivered to the RAE in September. On 21 September, the third prototype joined the A&AEE at Boscombe Down for the usual handling and performance tests. Although Flying Officer Kulozyski landed it with the undercarriage up due to an engine failure on 7 December 1942, Z1828 was repaired and by March 1943 it took part in the deck landing trials aboard HMS *Illustrious*.

FIREFLY F.1

Early production Firefly F.1s were identical to the prototypes in their preliminary design. The main difference consisted of a mass-balanced rudder, in place of the horn-balanced one and the Fairey-Youngman flaps had

With its large undernose air intake and unfaired, long-barrelled cannon, the Firefly F.1 looked rather aggressive. Although it was at a disadvantage regarding its size due to the two crew members it could easily out-turn many contemporary fighters.



One of the early pre-production Fireflies at the Fairey test airfield, Hayes, West London. The flatter canopy, unfaired cannon, three bladed propeller and canvas covered flying control surfaces are good indications.

their area slightly increased. The first production aircraft was flown on 5 January 1943. Several Fireflies among those first produced were intensively tested by the A&AEE as further improvements were still needed to make the Firefly a fully operational aircraft. In June 1943, the 13th Firefly was accepted as the representative machine for early production but, after testing, the A&AEE declared it only suitable for training as it suffered from porpoising, unsuitable elevators and heavy ailerons at high speed. These shortcomings led to the introduction of extended leading-edge elevators and metal-skinned ailerons and elevators instead of fabric. Firefly Z1888 finally appeared as an acceptable machine when it was tested at Boscombe Down in October 1943. The Firefly was then cleared for service.

During the production of the first batch,

Below: A formation of eight Firefly F.1s from 741 Squadron operating from St. Merryn. This squadron was an Operational Flying Training Unit providing strike courses. All ASH radars have been removed.



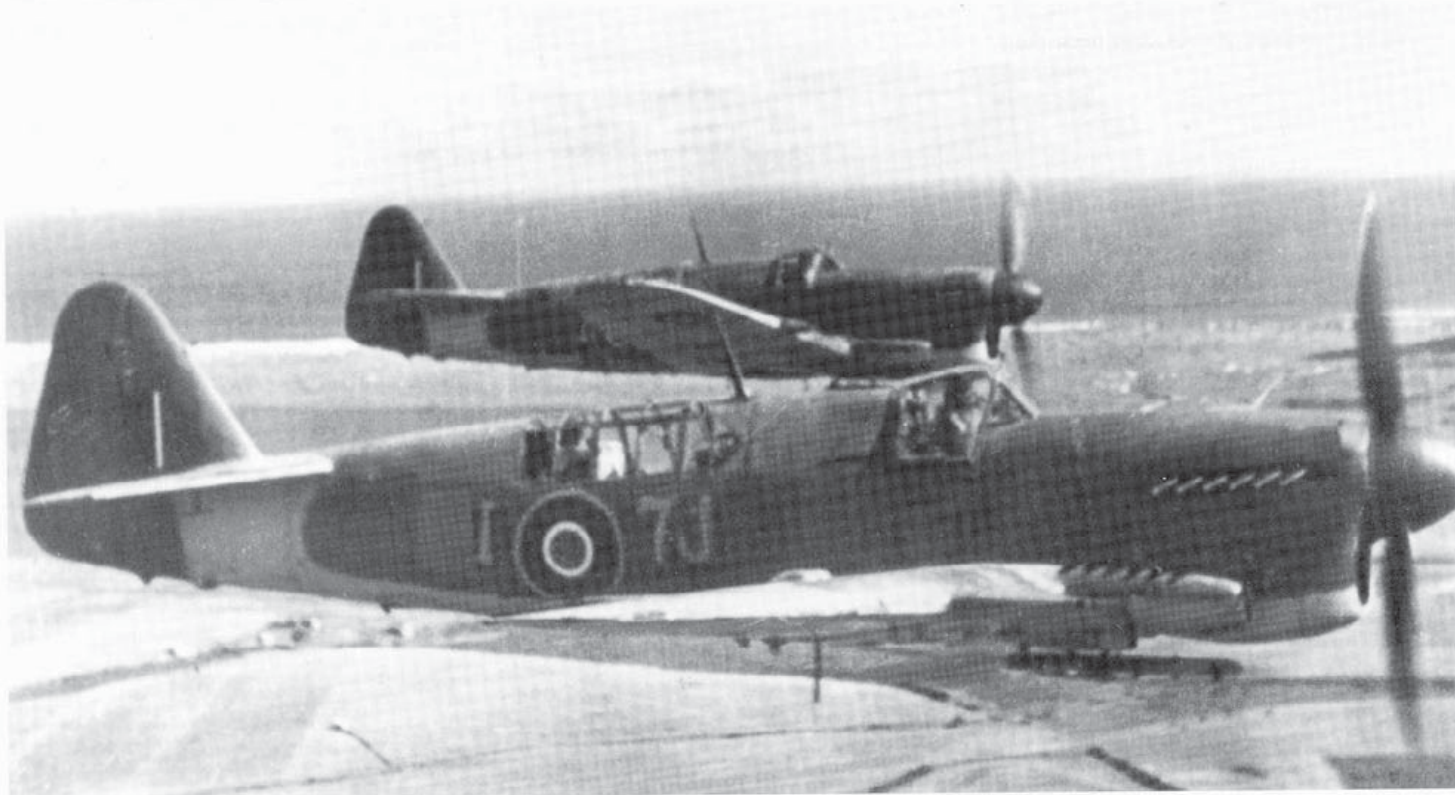
which included several night fighter variants, a redesigned windscreen, slightly higher, was introduced in order to improve pilot visibility. In addition, fairings were fitted to the entire cannon barrels. During the production run, the Griffon IIB gave way to the 1,815 hp Griffon XII from the 470th Mark I aircraft. In the end, the production of the Firefly F.I amounted to 459 (of which 132 were built by General Aircraft), the remain-

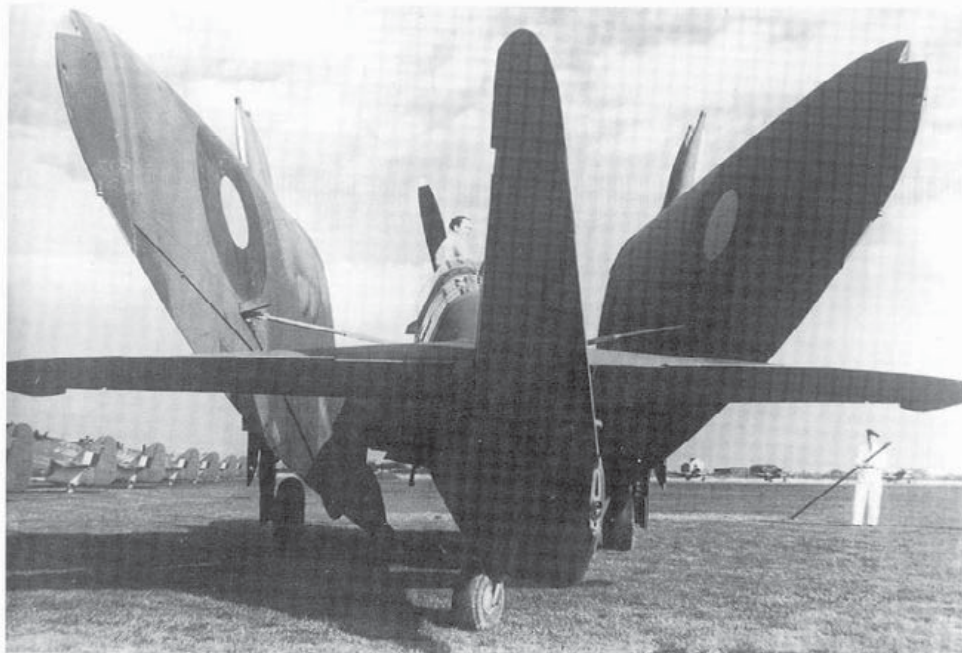
ing machines being night fighter and fighter-reconnaissance variants.

778 Squadron, the Service Trials Unit which had a flight especially intended for deck trials aboard *HMS Pretoria Castle*, logically became the first FAA operator of the Firefly. The first prototype was loaned to 778 Squadron in February 1943 and carried out ADDLs (Aerodrome Dummy Deck Landing) in the hands of naval pilots. Two other Fireflies were delivered to Crail in June and further machines reached 778 Squadron in August, when the unit moved to Arbroath. A first series of deck landing trials was successfully undertaken on 8 and 9 June 1943 aboard *HMS Illustrious* by Capt Brown with Z1844. The same aircraft was used three months later for trials on the smaller deck of *HMS Pretoria Castle*. Unfortunately, on the second day - 9 September - the hook did not lower and the Firefly crashed into the barriers. Further DLTs were conducted by Capt Lane on 22 November 1943 and another session was



Two Firefly FR.1s used by 796 Squadron while based at RNAS Rattray in 1946. 796 Squadron was part of the Operational Flying Training School and flew Firefly FR.1s and trainer variants until disbanded in November 1954.





Firefly FR.1 MB739 and a Firefly TT.4 of 771 Squadron. The Fleet Requirements Unit based at RNAS Ford was the main UK-based user of the Firefly TT.4 but used both variants.

in September 1944, and to 772 Squadron (FRU School) in September 1944.

IN SERVICE

carried out with two aircraft on 9 and 10 February 1944.

Among the first Fireflies delivered to the FAA several were issued to 787 Squadron (Naval Air Fighting Development Unit) in August 1943, to 748 Squadron (Naval Operational Training Unit) in June 1944, to 768 Squadron (Deck Landing Training Unit)

1770 Squadron at RNAS Yeovilton distinguished itself by becoming the first unit to operate the Firefly on 1 October 1943. It was part of a new series of squadron numbers. The first aircraft had actually reached Yeovilton on 27 September, followed by a second machine on 5 October. All the pilots flew the new aircraft two days later and were

Firefly with wings folded. This operation took the work of eight men for each wing and was a lengthy process. Power folded wings were introduced on the Firefly Mk.5, not before time.

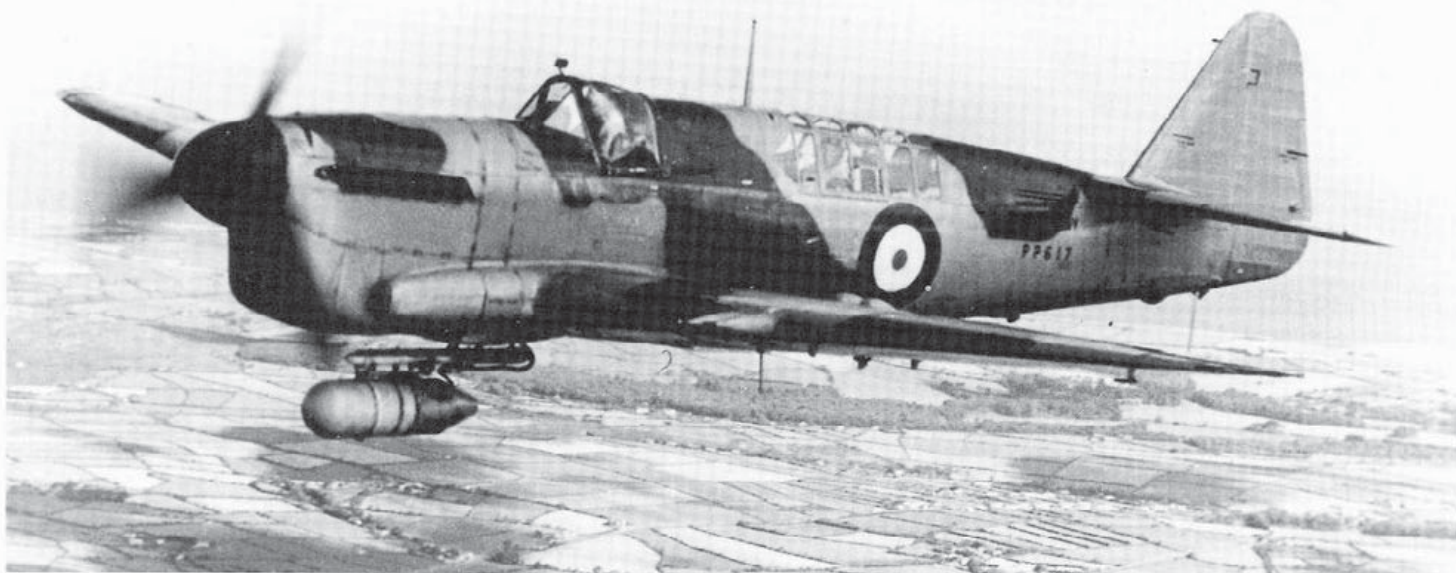
very pleased. Further Fireflies were delivered in the following two months and, with 16 aircraft and 14 crews on strength, 1770 Squadron began an intensive work-up under the command of Lt Cdr I.P. Godfrey.

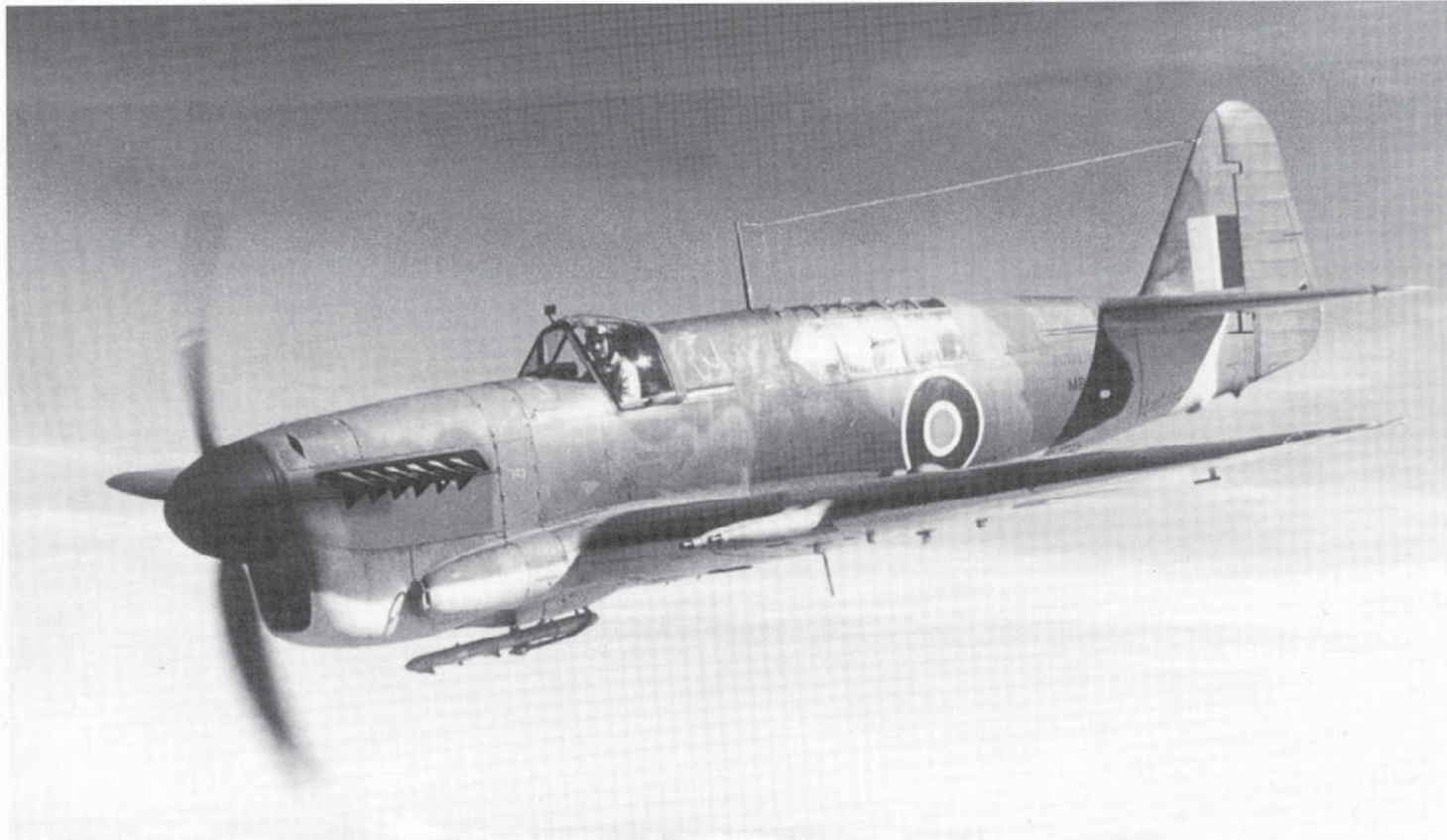
The first accident happened on 9 October when Sub-Lts Waters and Hollywood faced engine troubles on take-off and crashed the other side of Yeovilton village, escaping with burns. Otherwise, the Firefly was fully appreciated; the pilots being able to turn inside the agile Seafires. The work-up period was pursued at Grimsetter from December 1943 before moving to Hatston in February 1944. At this time a new CO was appointed, Major V.B.G. Cheesman RM, and the deck-landing programme was begun, first with ADDLs.

On 18 May 12 Fireflies left Hatston to land safely on the new *HMS Indefatigable*. They practised DLTs and then returned ashore, at Eglinton on 2 June. 1770 Squadron was back on board on 10 June to carry out exercises throughout the month in co-operation with the Seafires and Barracudas of the air group (RDF interceptions, bomber escorts, dive-bombing attacks and camera gun exercises, were included) for the forthcoming operations. Unfortunately, on 24 June, one Firefly with its crew, Lt Mackay and Sub-Lt Slater, was lost into the sea.

After a short stay at Grimsetter, the Fireflies rejoined *HMS Indefatigable* on 9 July for their first operational deployment. The first few days were spent practising with the air groups of *HMS Formidable* and *Furious*. Then the ships set sail for the Norwegian coast and the Fireflies were soon in action for operations against the *Tirpitz*. This battleship was hiding in a Norwegian

External differences between the Firefly NF.1 and FR.1 were difficult to distinguish as both could be fitted with shrouded exhausts. Here the two tone camouflage with Type A roundels of Firefly PP617 identifies it as an NF.1 of 792 Squadron, the Night Fighter Training Unit based at Culdrose





A production Firefly FR.1 during a test flight before delivery to a front-line squadron. The radar has yet to be fitted.

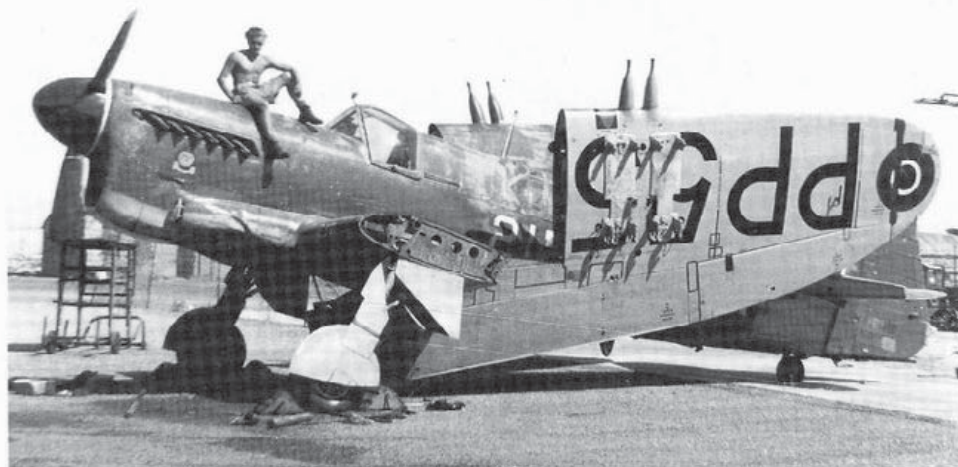
fjord but still remained a great threat to Allied shipping in northern waters. Several strikes had been launched before the Fireflies were first involved on 17 July 1944. The Fireflies, with Hellcats, Corsairs and Seafires, provided escort for 44 Barracudas. On reaching Kaa fjord, 1770 Squadron's aircraft dived first in order to suppress the anti-aircraft guns but there was a dense screen of smoke almost totally obscuring the battleship. The Firefly F.1s opened fire with 20 mm cannon at AA batteries and flak ships. On the way back, they attacked other gun posts and armed trawlers before joining up in pairs and returning with the Barracudas to the carriers. Two Fireflies landed on *HMS Indefatigable* with slight damage from flak; Sub-Lt I.H.F. Martin reported a flak hole in a wing tank while Sub-Lt G.E. Pugh had his aircraft's starboard wingtip damaged.

The 11 aircraft still serviceable flew ashore on 25 July, transiting via Hatston and Donibristle to reach Burscough on 27 July. There 1770 Squadron took possession of new Fireflies with enhanced hood, clear view panel, fittings for rockets and cannon fairings. The aircraft could then carry either two 500 lb bombs, or eight 60 lb R/Ps, or two 90 gal auxiliary tanks. In return, the aircraft were some 10 to 15 knots slower.

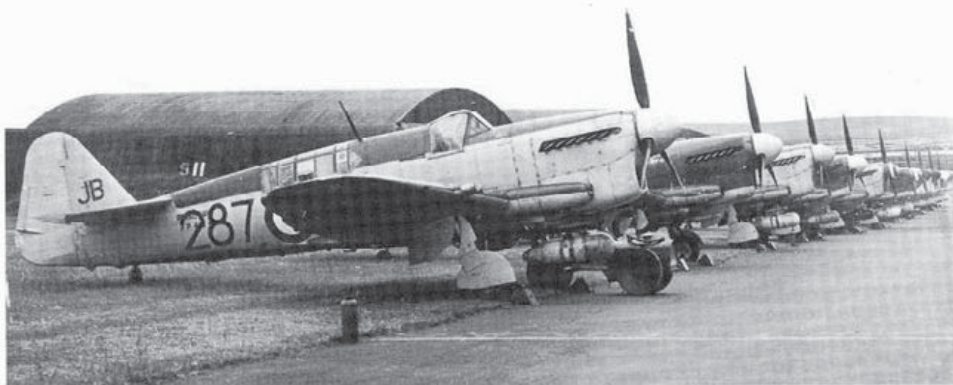
1770 Squadron joined *HMS Indefatigable* on 7 August for a second tour in northern waters. Two days later, they escorted 24 Avengers during a mine-laying mission. The escort was uneventful and the Fireflies attacked shore targets and coastal shipping. Unfortunately 1770 Squadron suffered its first loss when Sub-Lts Davies and Bennet ditched their aircraft and were killed. After returning to home-port for several days, they were back along the Norwegian coast on 22 August for another raid against the *Tirpitz*.

Two strikes were launched in the morning and another in the afternoon. Despite the first one being cancelled due to bad weather, the Fireflies as well as Hellcats proceeded to attack. On the second mission, the Fireflies again shot up the flak positions which always proved accurate hitting the Firefly of Sub-Lts Wilson and Thomson.

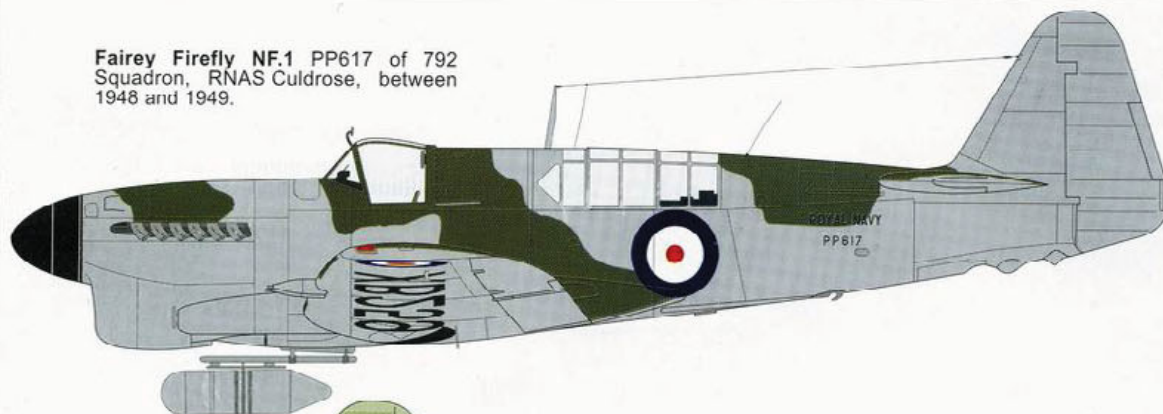
The next strike took place on 24 August but, as usual, the *Tirpitz* was covered by smoke when the aircraft arrived. The Barracudas managed to get two hits though. On 29 August, a last attack to put the *Tirpitz* out of action was attempted. Again no definitive result was obtained as the attacking force was spotted and the



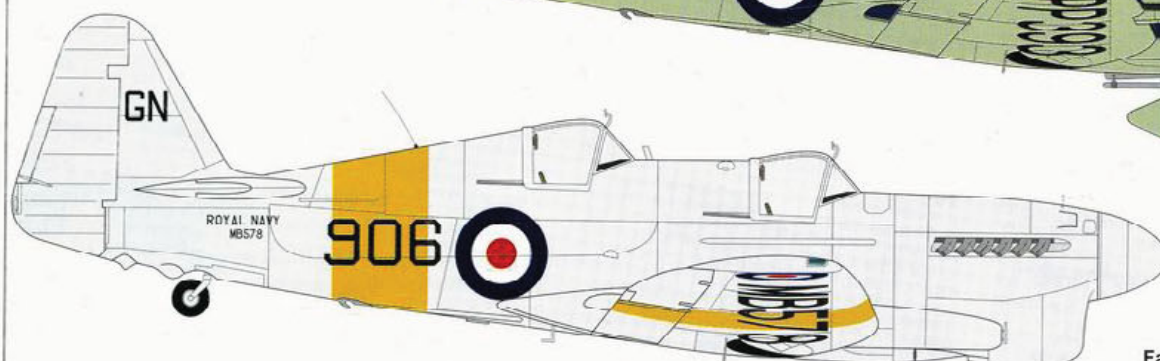
Above: Carrying a Bengal Tiger badge, this Firefly FR.1 of 816 Squadron was at Hal far between two tours on board *HMS Ocean* in 1947. Below: Line-up of Firefly FR.1s of 736 Squadron at St. Merryn. Different camouflage schemes and a variety of spinner colours distinguish each aircraft's previous service with front-line units.



Fairey Firefly NF.1 PP617 of 792 Squadron, RNAS Cudrose, between 1948 and 1949.

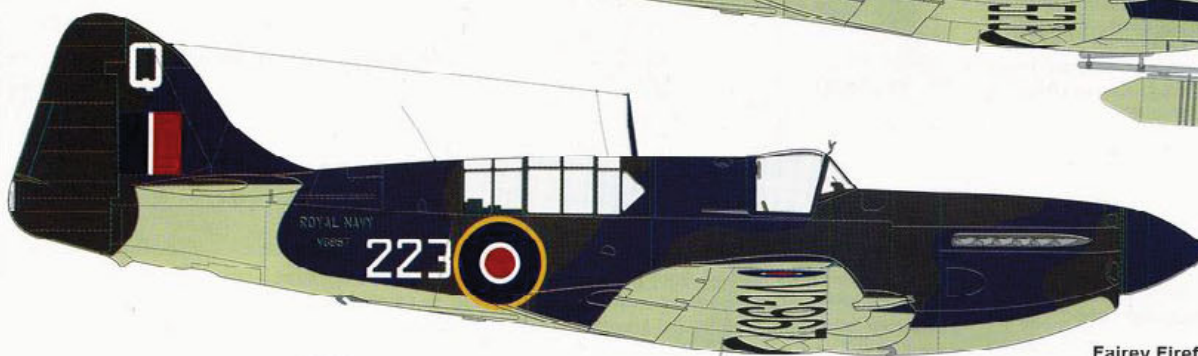
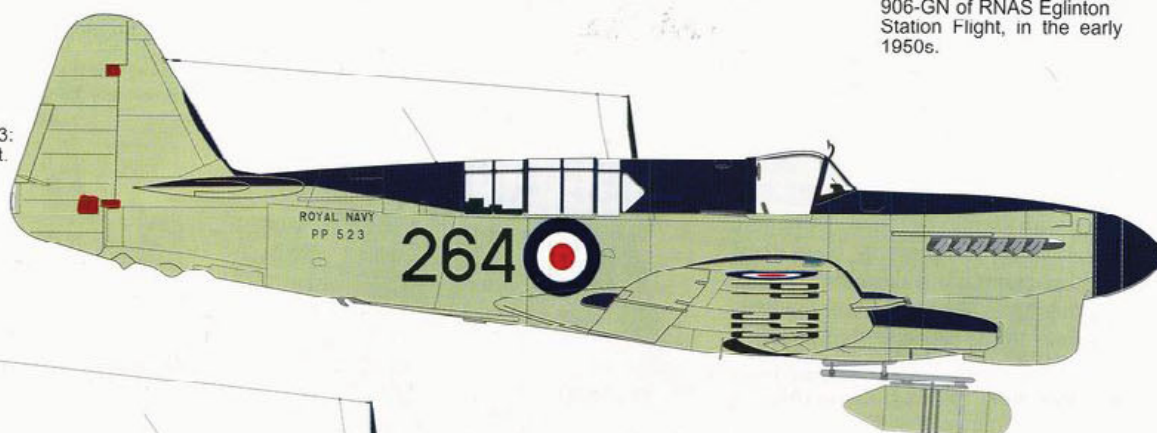


Fairey Firefly NF.1 PP393/212-R of 812 Squadron, 'Black Flight', HMS Glory, at RNAS HalFar in 1950.



Fairey Firefly T.1 MB578: 906-GN of RNAS Eglinton Station Flight, in the early 1950s.

Fairey Firefly T.3 PP523: 264 of 796 Squadron, St. Merryn in 1953.



Fairey Firefly FR.4 VG967/223-Q of 814 Squadron, HMS Vengeance, 10 February 1949.



Fairey Firefly TT.4 VG974/501-FD, of 700 Squadron, RNAS Ford in 1955.



Firefly F.1s of 1772 Squadron while operating from Schofields, Australia during the spring of 1945. Pacific Theatre insignias had yet to be painted. In the meantime, white paint was used to cover the red on the Type C markings.

usual smoke blanket prevented any effective bombing. While strafing a flak position near a W/T station, the Firefly of Sub-Lts R.D. Viney and N.J. Smith was directly hit and dived into the sea, killing both crew members. The fate of *Tirpitz* was finally decided by RAF Lancasters and huge 12,000 lb Tallboy bombs on 12 November 1944.

The last mission to Norway was as an escort for a mining operation on 19 September. 1770 Squadron was tasked to silence the AA batteries. The crews reported having hit several small ships. Lt D. Levitt left an armed trawler ablaze while Sub-Lt W. Thomson set fire to a motor launch.

Meanwhile 1771 Squadron had been formed at Yeovilton on 1 February 1944. It was destined to operate from *HMS Implacable*, which took over the operations along the Norwegian coast from *HMS Indefatigable* by then attached to the British Pacific Fleet. 1771 Squadron continued its work-up at Burscough from 3 March, including a period of DLT aboard the escort carrier *Trumpeter* from 29 June to 1 July and another aboard *HMS Ravager* on 16 and 17 August. The Fireflies finally landed aboard *HMS Implacable* on 22 September for their work-up at sea.

The following month the fleet carrier joined the Home Fleet and, on 18 October, 1771 Squadron took part in its first operation. Eleven Fireflies carried out a reconnaissance of the Tromsø area, in order to locate the *Tirpitz*. Two flights led by the CO, Lt Cdr Ellis, sighted the battleship south of Haakoy island and took photographs. The

This early model Firefly F.1 belonged to 1772 Squadron when it was working up at Burscough in 1944. The spinners each had two colours with the first being white, blue or yellow for the section and the last for the individual aircraft.

remaining flight attacked Bardufoss aerodrome and the seaplane base at Sørveisen. Lt A.V. Donaghy (with Lt R. Carpenter) destroyed a Heinkel He 115 while Sub-Lt J.E. Lumsden (with Sub-Lt A. Smith) damaged another one but returned with a canon shell in the wing trailing edge. Sub-Lt R.J. Blackburn (with Sub-Lt R.G. West) damaged a Junkers Ju 52 at Bardufoss.

On 26 October, 11 Fireflies escorted Barracudas in an anti-shipping strike between Meløy island and Sandnesjøen. The formation came across three TLCs with an escorting flak ship. 1771 Squadron attacked and sank one TLC, left the two others on fire and badly damaged the flak ship which was beached. In the afternoon, nine Fireflies escorted Barracudas to Rorvik and dived first in order to silence the flak. The aircraft of Sub-Lts R.M. Shaw and G.M. Smith was hit by enemy fire and crashed; only the observer survived as a prisoner of war. Following the Barracudas bombing, the Fireflies sighted an aircraft tender and set it ablaze.

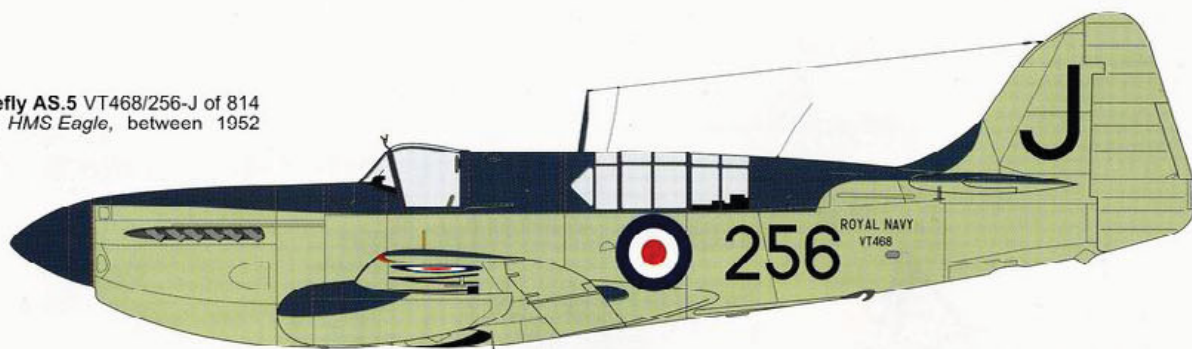
Another reconnaissance was launched on 27 October, this time from Meto to Rorvik.

A destroyer escorting a U-boat on the surface was sighted. Lt Cdr H.M. Ellis with Sub-Lt J. Ramsden directly attacked the ship which stopped and began to burn. Two other Fireflies dealt with the U-1060 and inflicted damage but the aircraft of Sub-Lts A.W. Waters and C.G. Weir was hit by return fire and crashed into the sea, killing the pilot. The second Firefly piloted by Sub-Lt J.T. Morgan (with Sub-Lt D.R. Manley) also experienced trouble and had to return to the carrier. The three Fireflies remaining with the Barracudas were then called in. Lt Donaghy directly hit the conning tower of the submarine which was subsequently driven aground and later destroyed by RAF Halifaxes and Liberators.

The next day morning, four Fireflies escorted Barracudas over Lodingen harbour which held several medium-sized ships. All ships found were shot up with cannons while the Barracudas dropped their 42 bombs; but only one hit. In the afternoon, 1771 Squadron sent six aircraft to protect eight torpedo-carrying Barracudas aiming at the same target. Again the Fireflies strafed the AA gun positions and the shipping. The



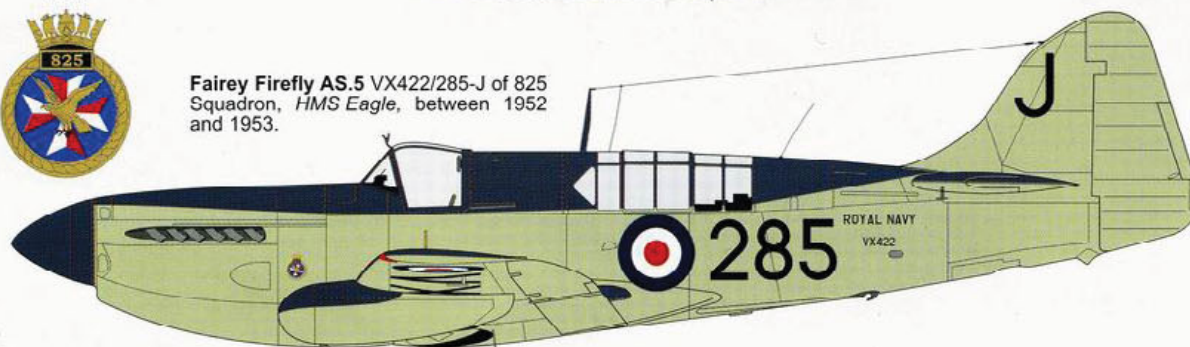
Fairey Firefly AS.5 VT468/256-J of 814 Squadron, *HMS Eagle*, between 1952 and 1953.



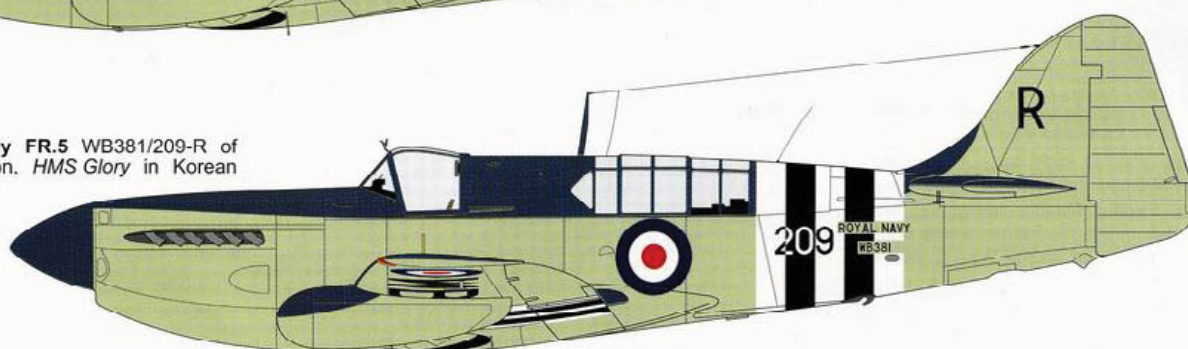
825 Squadron badge



Fairey Firefly AS.5 VX422/285-J of 825 Squadron, *HMS Eagle*, between 1952 and 1953.



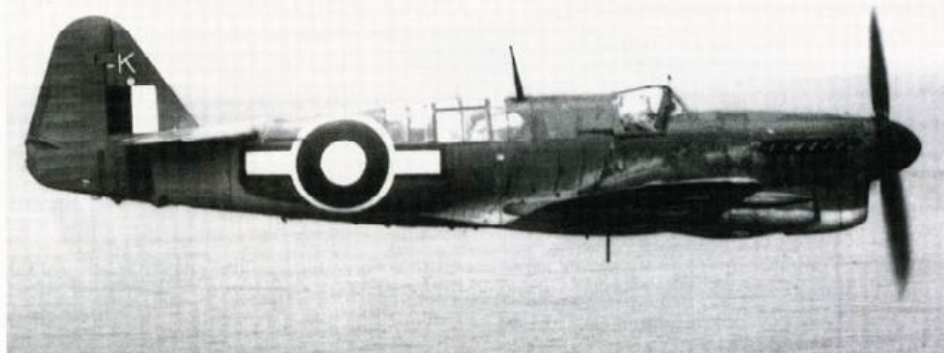
Fairey Firefly FR.5 WB381/209-R of 812 Squadron, *HMS Glory* in Korean waters 1952.



Home Fleet then returned to harbour and 1771 Squadron landed at Hatston on 7 November.

Operations along the Norwegian coast resumed shortly afterwards, with *HMS Implacable* sailing on 22 November. The strikes were first postponed due to bad weather. Finally, on 27 November, two Fireflies were sent off to carry out a reconnaissance over the Mosjøen area. Sub-Lt Johns (with Sub-Lt Westlake) reported the presence of two ships in Rorvik while Lt Davies (with Sub-Lt Reynolds) sighted one merchant vessel in Sandnesjoen and a convoy of three ships with a flak escort further south. Both aircraft attacked a merchant ship of 2,500 tons and set it on fire before returning. Barracudas immediately took off, with ten Fireflies and Seafires as escort, to attack the convoy. While the Barracudas successfully bombed a troopship and a merchant vessel, the fighters strafed and set the flak ship and the last small cargo ship on fire. On the way back, the fighters visited Mosjøen and strafed the installations. Lt Donaghy and Sub-Lt Lumsden reported damaging two other ships there.

After a short rest at Hatston, 1771 Squadron re-embarked aboard *HMS Implacable* on 5 December 1944. The carrier sailed the next day along with *HMS Trumpeter* and *Premier*. On 8 December at dawn, Fireflies and Martlets carried out armed reconnaissances north of Haugesund. Although the 12 Fireflies had to face a snow storm, they managed to detect two heavily camouflaged ships and set them on fire



Above: A Firefly F.1 of 1772 Squadron flying over *HMS Indefatigable* in August 1945. Below: 837 Squadron was based in Australia when the war ended. It stayed there for re-equipment with the Firefly FR.1 in October 1945. The squadron then joined *HMS Glory* in June 1946 for a cruise in the Indian Ocean.





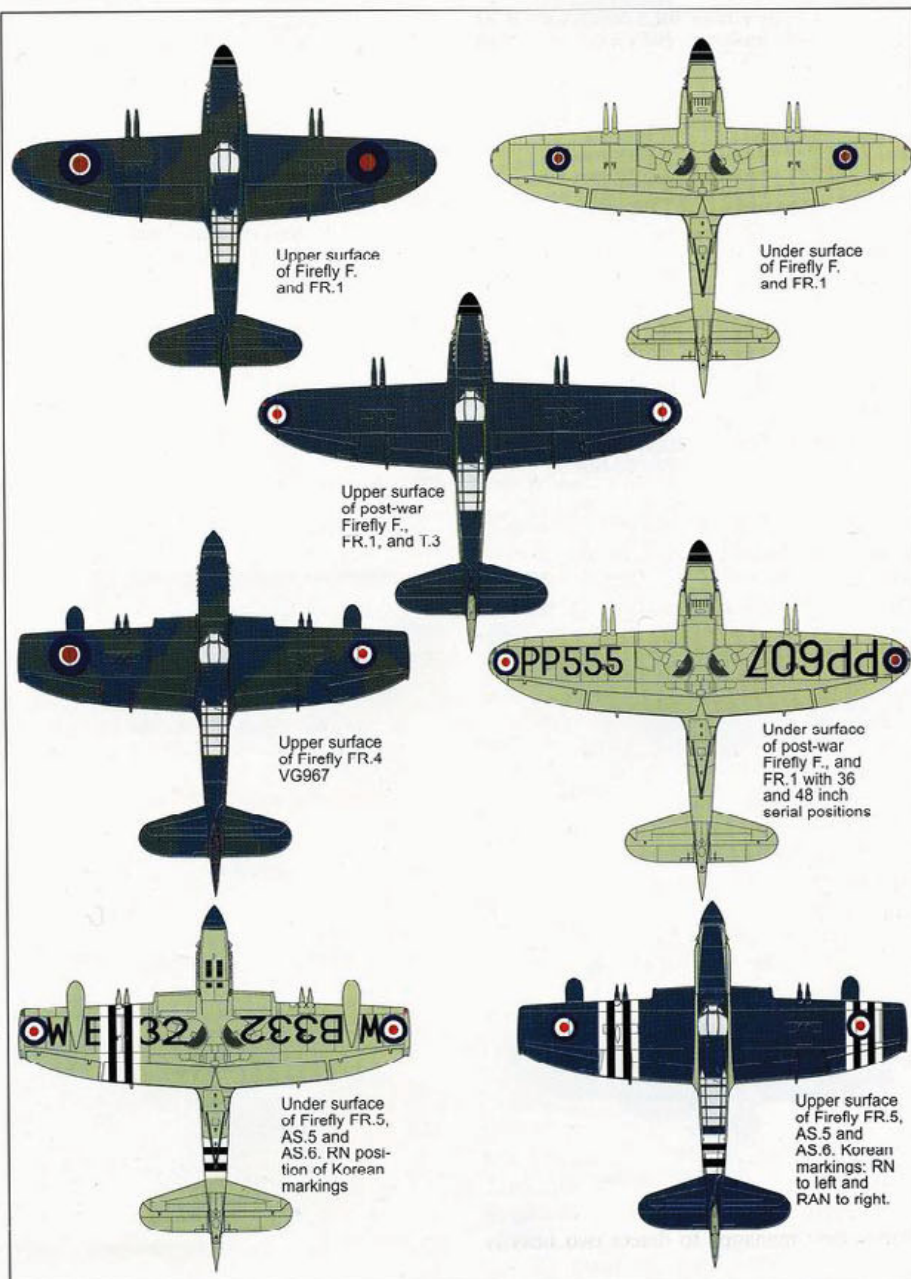
Seafire F.XVIs of 805 Squadron and Firefly FR.1s of 816 Squadron ranged on the aft deck of *HMS Ocean* in preparation for being shore-based at HalFar during a Mediterranean cruise.

together with two further ships moored alongside. This operation was the last over Norway for 1771 Squadron. The unit landed at Hatston on 9 December and stayed ashore for more than three months until its embarkation to join the British Pacific Fleet. During a night DLT session on 6 March 1945, Lt Cdr H.M. Ellis, the CO, hit the round-down of *HMS Pretoria Castle* and disappeared into the sea.

The third Firefly fighter squadron to be formed was 1772 Squadron, under the command of Lt Cdr A.H.D. Gough, at Burscough on 1 May 1944. Three other units were to have been added to the 1770 series but the end of the war curtailed their effective formation. The work-up period of 1772 Squadron was marked by several accidents, including one mid-air collision, and three of them cost the lives of four aircrew during the summer of 1944. Another incident, during a taxiing accident, led to the destruction of three more Fireflies and the CO had to leave command, Lt Cdr L.C. Wort taking over.

On 25 and 26 November 1772 Squadron completed its DLT period aboard *HMS Empress* in the Irish Sea. The aircraft piloted by Sub-Lt J.T. O'Driscoll flew through the barrier as its hook bounced and ended in aircraft parked forward. On returning ashore, the Fireflies were handed over to 766 Squadron at Inskip and new aircraft with long-range tank facilities were issued. 766 Squadron was then part of No.1 Naval Operational Training Unit and was based at Inskip, before moving to Rattray in January 1946 and to Lossiemouth in August 1946. It operated Fireflies along with Sea Hurricanes, Seafires and Sea Furies until disbandment on 25 November 1954.

With the work-up completed, 1772 Squadron flew to Belfast on 16 January 1945 as the first step of their journey to join



COMMONWEALTH FLEET AIR ARM SQUADRONS

Squadron	Mark	Dates	Squadron	Mark	Dates
805	FR/NF.I	Aug 46-Mar 47	700	Mk.I	Mar 45-Sep 49
810	FR.4	Oct 47-Oct 49		TT.4	Aug 55-Feb 57
	AS/FR.5	Oct 49-Nov 53	703	FR.I	Aug 45-May 49
812	FR/NF.I	Jan 46-Feb 48		FR.4	Jul 47-Jul 51
	FR.4	Jan 48-Aug 49		AS.5/6	Jul 51-Aug 55
	FR.5	Jul 48-Jul 52	706	Mk.I	Nov 45-Jan 46
	AS.6	Jul 52-Oct 53	719	FR.I	Jun 46-Jan 47
814	FR.I	Jan 46-Mar 48		AS.5/6	May 49-Jun 53
	FR.4	Apr 48-Aug 49		T.7	Mar 53-Jun 56
	FR.5	Feb 49-Nov 50	723 (RAN)	Mk.5/6	May 52-Oct 56
	AS.6	Jan 51-May 54		TT.5	Nov 54-Oct 56
816	FR/NF.I	Jul 45-Jun 48	724 (RAN)	Mk.5/6	Jun 55-Oct 56
816 (RAN)	FR.4	Aug 48-Feb 49		TT.6	Nov 62-Mar 66
	FR.5/		725 (RAN)	TT.5/6	Jan 58-May 59
	AS.5/6	March 49-Apr 55	727	FR.4	Nov 48-Jan 50
817 (RAN)	AS.5/6	Apr 50-Apr 55	728B	U.8/9	Jan 58-Nov 61
	FR.5	Sep 51-Feb 52	732	NF.I	May 45-Nov 45
820	AS.5/6	Jul 51-Mar 54	736	FR.I	Jan 46-Feb 50
821	AS.6	Sep 51-May 52		T.1	Jul 48-Feb 50
	FR.5	May 52-May 53	737	Mk.I/4/5/6	
822	FR.I	Sep 45-Feb 46		T.1/2	Apr 49-Jun 55
824	FR.I	Oct 45-Jan 46	741	FR.I	Aug 46-Nov 47
	AS.6	Feb 52-Jul 53	744	Mk.I	Jul 45-Sep 45
825 (RCN)	FR.I	Nov 45-May 47		AS.6	Jul 51-Nov 55
	FR.4	May 47-Feb 49	746	NF.I/II	May 43-Jan 46
	AS.5	Feb 49-May 51	748	Mk.I	Jun 44-Jun 45
825	FR/AS.5	Jun 51-Dec 54	750	T.7	Apr 53-Mar 55
826 (RCN)	FR.I	Jan 46-Sep 50	751	AS.6	Sep 52-Mar 56
826	AS.6	May 51-Jan 55	764	T.1/2	May 53-Nov 54
827	FR/NF.I	Aug 46-Nov 50	765	T.2/7	Feb 55-Mar 57
		Aug 51-May 52	766	Mk.I	Oct 44-Nov 54
837	FR.I	Oct 45-Oct 47		T.1/2	Jan 48-Nov 54
851 (RAN)	AS.6/T.5	Aug 54-Jan 58	767	FR.I	Sep 45-Mar 52
880 (RCN)	AS.5	May 51-Nov 51		FR.4	Oct 49-May 54
1770	F.I	Sep 43-Sep 45		AS.6	Mar 51-Dec 51
1771	F.I	Feb 44-Oct 45	768	Mk.I	Sep 44-Jul 55
1772	F.I	May 44-Mar 46			Dec 48-Mar 49
1790	NF.I	Jan 45-Apr 46	771	T.1/2	Jul 50-Aug 52
1791	NF.I	Mar 45-Sep 45		AS.6	Oct 50-Dec 53
1792	NF.I	May 45-Apr 46		TT.4/5	Nov 51-Aug 55
1830 (RNVR)	FR.I	Aug 47-54	772	Mk.I/NF.II	Sep 44-Feb 46
	T.1/2/3	Jun 48-Nov 55	778	FR.I	Feb 43-Jul 48
	FR.4	Aug 53-Nov 55		FR.4	Feb 47-Nov 47
	AS.6	Oct 51-Nov 54	781	F.I	Jan 45-Jul 45
1831 (RNVR)	T.1	Jun 48-Dec 48		T.1/2	
	T.3	May 52-Aug 52		Mk.I/4/5	Sep 49-Mar 54
1833 (RNVR)	T.2/3	Sep 52-Jul 54	782	FR.I	Aug 45-May 53
1840 (RNVR)	FR.4	Apr 51-Jul 51		FR.4	Dec 48-Apr 53
	T.2	Jul 51-Jun 54		T.1/2	May 50-May 53
	AS.6	Jul 51-May 56	783	Mk.I	Mar 45-Dec 46
	T.7	Mar 56-Nov 56	784	NF.I	Sep 44-Sep 46
1841 (RNVR)	FR.I	Aug 52-Jun 54	787	Mk.I	Aug 43-Jun 45
	T.2/3	Aug 52-Oct 55		FR.4	Apr 47-Jan 49
	AS.6	Mar 55-Dec 55	790	Mk.I	Jun 44-Apr 47
1842 (RNVR)	AS.6	March 53-May 56	792	NF.I	Jan 48-Jul 50
	T.2	March 53-Jun 56	794	NF.I	Dec 45-Jan 47
1843 (RNVR)	FR.I	March 53-54	795	FR.I	Aug 46-Mar 47
	FR.4	Aug 53-Nov 55	798	Mk.I	Nov 44-Nov 45
	AS.6	March 53-Nov 55	799	FR.I	Aug 45-Aug 52
	T.1/2/3	March 53-Nov 55		T.1/2	May 49-Aug 52
1844 (RNVR)	FR.5/AS.6	Feb 54-Jun 56		FR.4	Nov 4-Jan 52
	T.2/3	Feb 54-Sep 54			

the Pacific Fleet. The aircraft were craned on to *HMS Ruler* while the personnel were divided between *HMS Ruler* and *Activity*.

On 18 March 1945, 1772 Squadron disembarked at Schofields, Australia, where they practised live firing and more Deck Landing



Practice with *HMS Ruler*.

PACIFIC STRIKES

The first Fireflies to have reached the Eastern theatre were those of 1770 Squadron. After a stay at Puttalam, Ceylon, during December 1944, the Fireflies joined *HMS Indefatigable* on 24 December. They were first involved in attacks against the strongly defended oil refineries in Sumatra, in company with *HMS Victorious* and *Indomitable*. On 4 January 1945, the Fireflies led the strike on three allotted targets at Pangkalan Brandan in northern Sumatra; the thumble plant, the power house and the pre-topping plant all were blown up as the flights attacked in succession. Over the target, the Fireflies were detached in order to silence the AA batteries. Japanese fighters appeared to defend the refinery and Lt D. Levitt shot down a Ki-43 Hayabusa while another was shared by Sub-Lts Stott and Redding. On the way back to the carrier, the Fireflies were detached to strafe the harbour of Pangkalan Soe Soe and three of them set fire to a small tanker. While in the landing circuit, the aircraft of Sub-Lt A.W. Tucker and E. Miller ditched due to a shortage of fuel; and the crew were rescued by a destroyer.

Before sailing for the Pacific, the four British carriers (*HMS Illustrious* had joined by that time) carried out a final operation on Japanese-held oil installations. This time the target was the largest oil refining site held by the Japanese and was located at Palembang in south-east Sumatra. Two principal installations were selected; the Pladjoe refinery and the Soengi Gerong plant. The first strike took place at Pladjoe on 24 January. When

Firefly FR.1, coded 225, seen on board an aircraft carrier taking part in deck landing practice. It was normally based at Milltown in Scotland.



A Firefly FR.1 of 827 Squadron attached to *HMS Triumph* retracting its undercarriage shortly after take-off. All Fireflies on this page had the same new camouflage scheme adopted in 1946-47 but this one differed in having Type A roundels.

Mana and its airfield, this target having previously been strafed as a diversionary measure.

The next step in the Pacific war was the occupation of Okinawa. For this operation, named 'Iceberg', the British Pacific Fleet joined the American 5th Fleet as Task Force 57 in mid-March. While the Americans dealt with Okinawa, the BPF hit the airfields on the Sakashima Gunto islands. The purpose was to stop the use of the airfields on the three main islands of this archipelago by Japanese aircraft trying to attack the US forces around Okinawa. The first attack took place on Miyako airfield on 26 March. As usual, the Fireflies were given the task of first silencing the AA positions. Then they aimed at any target of interest. While firing at shipping in the bay, the aircraft of Sub-Lts B. Hebditch and A.E. Cundell was hit and crashed into the sea. The operation was repeated the next day.

After a replenishment, a second series of strikes was carried out on Miyako and Ishigaki airfields from 31 March to 2 April and a third from 5 to 7 April. After the usual attacks on the AA positions, 1770 Squadron provided CAPs along the way from the target to the carriers. On several occasions Fireflies also carried out searches for ditched aircraft and escorts for ASR flying-boats. The Japanese did not only defend themselves and sustain the British attacks but they also reacted by sending bombers and suicide aircraft. On 1 April, one Mitsubishi Zero directly crashed on to the flight deck of *HMS Indefatigable*, only putting the carrier temporarily out of action. Despite these continuous attacks on the airfields, the Japanese

Firefly PP404 was one of the new FR.1s which survived with the Scottish Air Division, RNVR until 1954.

the British aircraft were approaching, enemy fighters appeared but the fighter cover caught them. The Fireflies, immediately followed by the Avengers, pressed on and flew through a barrage of balloons and rocketed their objective. While the Corsairs and Hellcats were waiting at the rendezvous point or were engaged in dogfights over the target, the nine Fireflies of 1770 Squadron fought with numerous Ki-43 Hayabusas (Oscar) and Ki-44 Shokis (Tojo) which attacked the Avengers on their way to the rendezvous. Despite an unfavourable situation, the Fireflies proved efficient against these agile and light fighters, and reported the destruction of two Ki-43s as the Corsairs and Hellcats of the fighter cover turned out

to be incapable of protecting the Avengers.

For the second strike at Soengi Gerong on 29 January, nine Fireflies accompanied the Avengers all the way to the target and were first aimed at the suppression of the barrage balloons and flak. A great number of balloons were falling in flames when the Avengers deployed for diving. Once again, the Avengers were set upon by the Japanese as they made for the rendezvous point and few escorts were available except the Fireflies. A Ki-44 Shoki and two Ki-43 Hayabusas were destroyed by the Fireflies. Unfortunately this last sortie cost the lives of Lts D. Levitt and J.F. Webb. In addition to the escort, 1770 Squadron also provided two aircraft for an armed reconnaissance over





Left: Firefly F.1 Z1905 was delivered to 1771 Squadron while forming at Yeovilton on 1 February 1944. It remained with the squadron until being shot down by flak during an operation over Norway on 26 October 1944. Lower left: 1771 Squadron moved to Burscough in March 1944 where the aircraft carried out DLT aboard the carriers *HMS Trumpeteer* and *Ravager*.

repaired the runways overnight and were able to launch kamikaze aircraft.

After receiving reinforcements from a flight of 1772 Squadron, 1770 Squadron resumed operations on 12 April with a strike on Kiirun harbour in the north of Formosa; this being the island used to attack the American ships off Okinawa. On the same day, two Fireflies which were escorting a SAR Mariner flying-boat met five Ki-51 Sonias. Lt W. Thompson, with Sub-Lt E. Miller in the backseat, shot down one pair while two other dive-bombers fell to the guns of Sub-Lt J.P. Stott and Lt B. Ward; only one Ki-51 escaping damaged. The following day, 1770 Squadron rocketed a radar station at Yonakumi whilst the Avengers were bombing two local airfields. The operations over Formosa were then completed and the ships withdrew for replenishment.

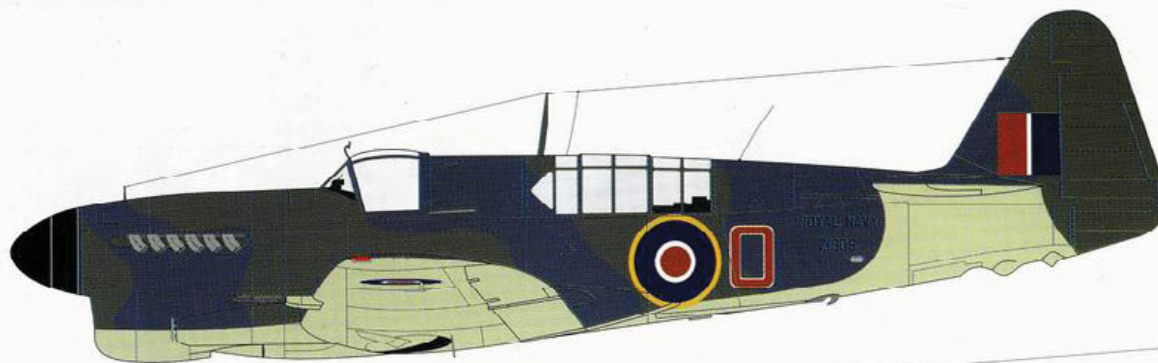
The next strikes were carried out on the well-known Miyako and Ishigaki airfields from 16 to 19 April. As these airfields were being continuously repaired, the Fireflies and the Avengers had to do their destruction work tirelessly. After a rest at Leyte, the BPF was again in action on 4 May. Strafing and rocket attacks were repeated on the airfields in the Sakashima Gunto islands as well as on radar and radio stations and shipping throughout May. Strikes were launched on 4 and 5 May and again on 8 and 9 May, in conjunction with bombardments by the battle-ships. The BPF came under further kamikaze attacks but *HMS Indefatigable* was spared.

After replenishment and reparation for the carriers which were hit by suicide aircraft, the BPF was back for operations on 12 May. In addition to escorting the Avengers over Miyako and Ishigaki, the Fireflies struck a radio station at Hirara. The next day, another radio station was rocketed on Ishigaki. On 16 May, a third station was destroyed on Miyako. On 17 May, 1770 Squadron attacked shipping at Osaki on the Miyako coast.

On 20 May, two strikes were launched. The first flight attacked a radar station at Henna Saki whilst the other Fireflies struck Hirara airfield. During the following day, 1770 Squadron was directed on a radar station at Nobara. The final strikes of Operation 'Iceberg' were made on 24 and 25 May and consisted of the bombing of six airfields in the Sakashima Gunto islands. After completing their escort duties, the Fireflies were released to attack targets of opportunity in the Hirara area and a naval base which housed suicide boats.

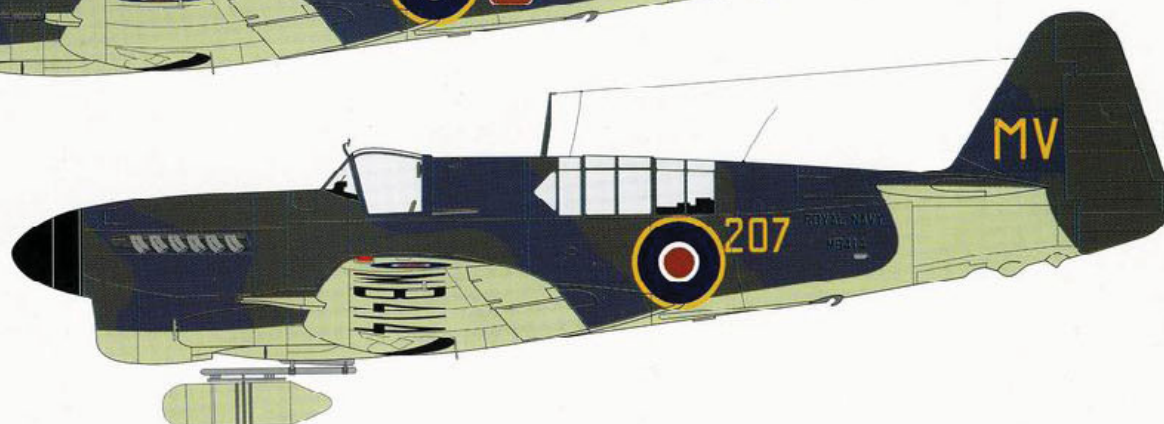
The BPF then retired on 26 May and reached Australia on 5 June, putting an end to the wartime activities of 1770 Squadron.

Top left: Firefly F.1 DK431 was the personal aircraft of 1771 Squadron's CO, Lt Cdr W.J.R. MacWhirter. Left: The same aircraft displayed the name 'Evelyn Tensions' in white in addition to the yellow map of Japan which was painted on all 1771 Squadron's aircraft.

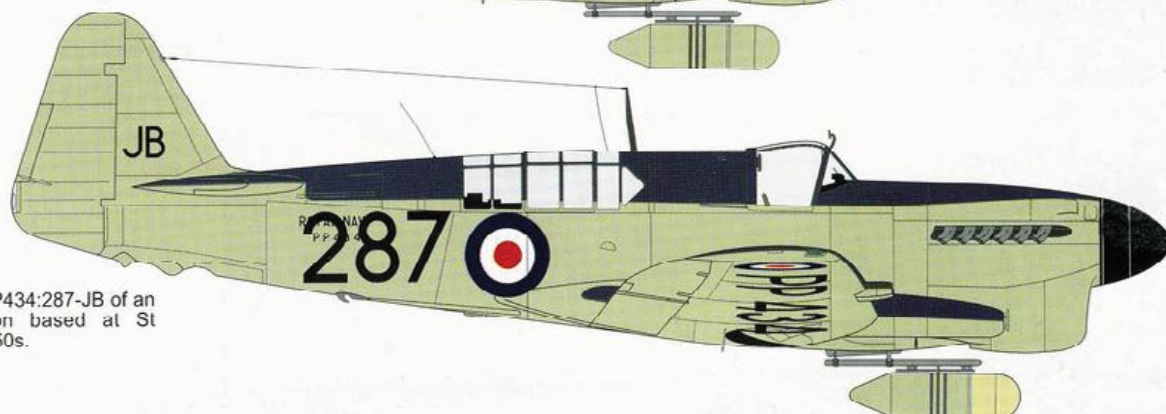


Fairey Firefly FR.1
Z1905:O of an
unknown squadron
in the mid-1940s.

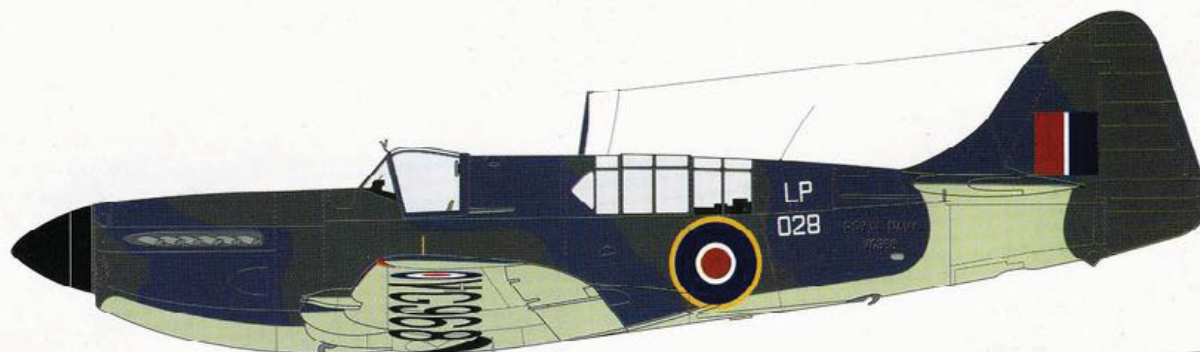
Fairey Firefly FR.1
MB414:207-MV of
767 Squadron,
RNAS Milltown in
the early 1950s.



Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP555:276-P of 827
Squadron, *HMS Triumph* in the late
1940s.

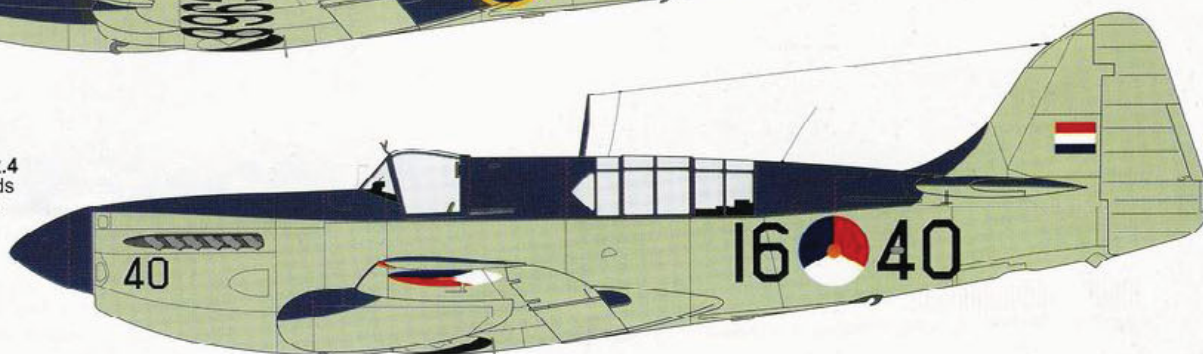


Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP434:287-JB of an
FAA training squadron based at St
Merryn in the early 1950s.



Fairey Firefly FR.4
VG968:028-LP of
778 Squadron of
the Fleet Air Arm
Service Trials Unit,
RNAS Lee-on-
Solent in 1948.

Fairey Firefly FR.4
16-40, Netherlands
East Indies in the
late 1940s.





Above: A Firefly F.1 of 1771 Squadron just after landing on *HMS Implacable* returning from a strike on German shipping off the Norwegian coast. Their main task was to provide close escort for Barracudas and suppress the flak before the bombers began their dive bombing attack. Below: The entire

1770 Squadron during a deck landing practice period in May 1944. These Fireflies saw action over Norway in July but were then superseded by new aircraft with higher cockpit hoods, full cannon fairings and rails for rocket projectiles.





A Firefly NF.1 of 1790 Squadron catching the wire during a deck landing practise session on the escort carrier *HMS Puncher* in 1945. The Firefly night fighter squadrons formed too late to see service with the British Pacific Fleet.

There *HMS Implacable*, with 1771 Squadron now commanded by Lt Cdr W.J.R. MacWhirter, was waiting to join the British ships in the Pacific. Most of May had been spent ashore in Australia and 1771 Squadron, with a section of 1772 Squadron which was on loan, had re-embarked by 24 May.

HMS Implacable, with *HMS Ruler*, was first involved in an attack on Truk island in the Carolines on 14 June. Several missions were carried out throughout the day. Armed with 60 lb R/Ps, four Fireflies were sent to a radar station which had not previously been discovered. Two other aircraft of 1771 Squadron escorted Avengers and later attacked a radio station. Three Fireflies were aimed at an airfield and claimed direct hits on two Japanese aircraft; another flight was also launched later on the same target. In the afternoon, four Fireflies searched for shipping north of Dublon island. The last mission of the day consisted in a dusk patrol of three machines. On 15 June, the Fireflies travelled all along the coast searching for worthwhile targets while the ships were doing a heavy - but ineffective - bombardment. Then the British ships returned to Manus.

The BPF, now including two fleet carriers in addition to *HMS Implacable* and, forming Task Force 37, resumed operations on 17 July, with a first incursion over the Japanese mainland. Eight Fireflies of 1771 Squadron rocketed Matsushima, Sendai and Masuda airfields on the east coast. Before returning to the carrier, they searched for targets of opportunity along the coast. The next day, another airfield near Tokyo was attacked by Fireflies. *HMS Indefatigable* with 1772 Squadron aboard joined the BPF two days later.

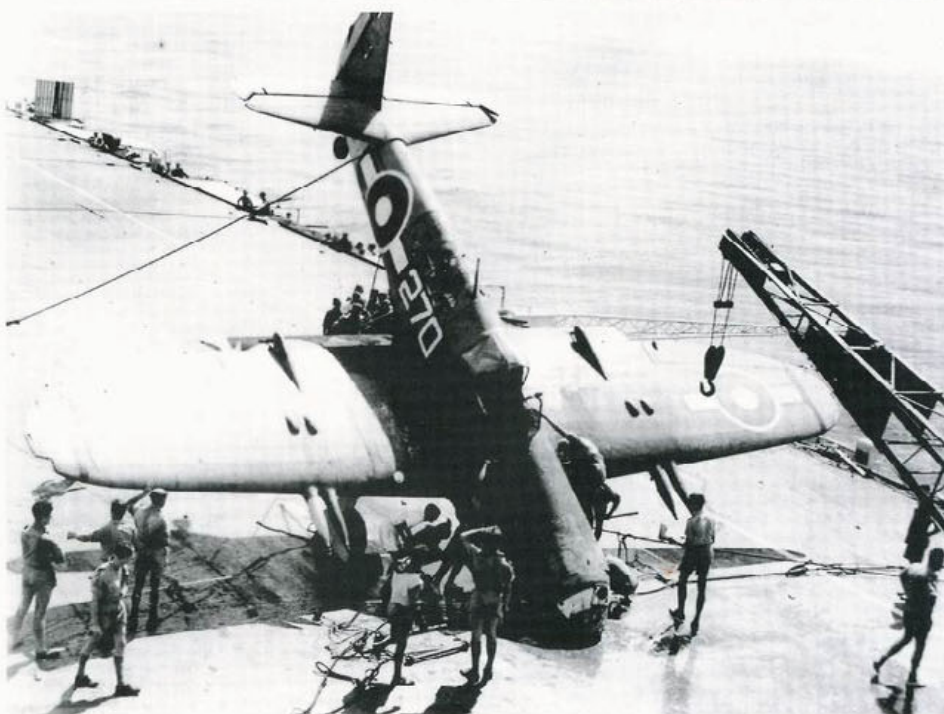
While the two Firefly units were both in action on 24 July, each was allotted different targets. 1771 Squadron searched for any shipping in the Nagoya area and 1772

Squadron attacked Japanese bomber bases, Tokushima airfield in the morning and Takamatsu airfield in the afternoon. Ajiri Saki harbour was later hit. Both squadrons lost an aircraft due to lack of fuel, Sub-Lt M.I.J. Goodsell of 1772 Squadron did not survive the ditching. A second Firefly of 1771 Squadron was lost when it suffered a fatal hit during its dive, causing the death of Sub-Lts J.T. Morgan and N.G. Doy. Two Fireflies of 1771 Squadron, two Corsairs and six Avengers found the escort carrier *Kaiyo* hidden in Shido Wan harbour and set it on fire before leaving it with a broken

back. This was the FAA's only opportunity of attacking a carrier.

On 25 July, 1771 Squadron renewed its attacks against shipping while 1772 Squadron visited Ajiro Saki harbour and Tokushima airfield. After withdrawal for replenishment, the Fireflies came back on 28 July. 1771 Squadron succeeded in setting ablaze a ship in Sato Bay. 1772 Squadron attacked Harima shipyard in Oo Bay twice, sinking a 7,000 ton tanker and setting fire to three merchant vessels. This attack nevertheless cost the lives of a crew from 1772 Squadron - Lt C.P.R. Stevens and Sub-Lt A.M. La Grange - while 1771 Squadron also lost an aircraft due to lack of fuel. Owing to bad weather, operations were postponed until 30 July. 1771 Squadron's aircraft were aimed at the Maizuru naval base while the sister unit struck at Susuka airfield and, later, Yokkaichi harbour.

The next replenishment stretched over one week as typhoons arrived and the Hiroshima atomic bomb was dropped. The BPF returned to its operational position on 9 August. The Fireflies of 1771 Squadron were divided between Konega Bay and Matsushima airfield. 1772 Squadron also visited this airfield and both squadrons added several aircraft destroyed on the



Top right: Firefly FR.1 MB635 of 812 Squadron was shore-based at Katukurunda, Ceylon for a three month period before disbanding. Right: A Firefly FR.1 of 812 Squadron which came to grief on its return aboard *HMS Vengeance* during a cruise in the Indian Ocean in 1946. Contrary to the aircraft of the photograph above which had East Indies fleet roundels on the fuselage sides, and Pacific theatre insignia on the upper port and lower starboard wings, this Firefly had only Pacific theatre markings.

Fairey Firefly AS.6 WJ105:276-R of 826 Squadron, *HMS Glory*, 11 November 1953.



Fairey Firefly AS.6 WD908:226-T of 820 Squadron, *HMS Theseus*, shore based at Hal Far in 1953.



820 Squadron badge

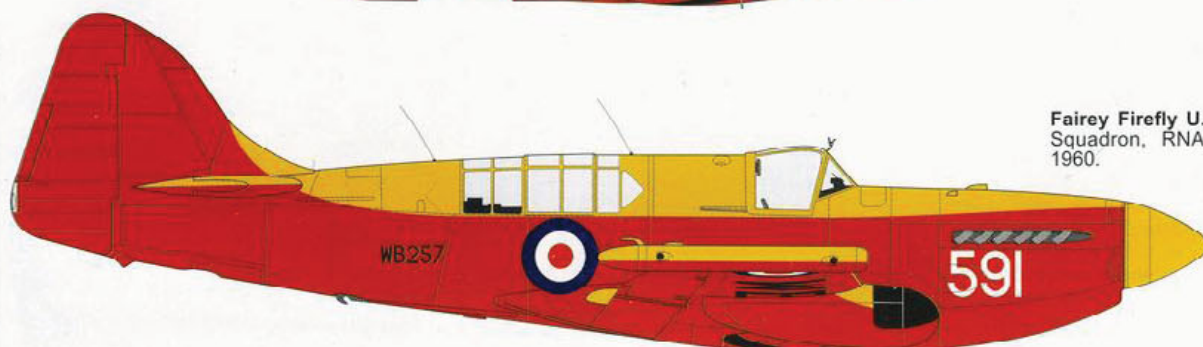
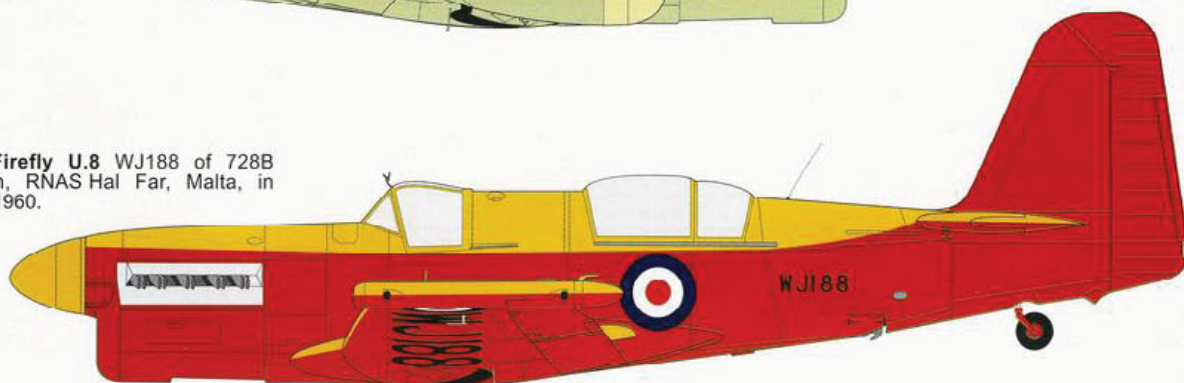


Fairey Firefly AS.6 WD910:891-BR, Royal Naval Reserve, RNAS Bramcote, January 1956.



Fairey Firefly T.7 WJ202:764-CU of 764 Squadron, RNAS Culdrose in 1956.

Fairey Firefly U.8 WJ188 of 728B Squadron, RNAS Hal Far, Malta, in October 1960.



Fairey Firefly U.9 WB257:591 of 728B Squadron, RNAS Hal Far, Malta, in 1960.



A pair of 816 Squadron Firefly FR.1s in 1948. The squadron was based on board *HMS Ocean* in the Mediterranean and was involved in the British withdrawal from Palestine at that time.

ground to their records. On 10 August, both Firefly units were sent to attack any target of interest; striking Koriyama, Masuda and Matsushima airfields and tracking shipping at Hokkaichi and Onagawa Wan. Sadly 1772 Squadron lost two aircraft during the attack on Koriyama; Sub-Lts G.D. Roberts and T.C.G. McBride were killed and Sub-Lts B.F. O'Neill and T.I. Darby became prisoners of war for a few days.

HMS Implacable then returned to Australia for repairs and only *HMS Indefatigable* soldiered on. 1772 Squadron made a sweep over the Tokyo area on 13 August, blowing up a train. After a replenishment, 1772 Squadron flew off on 15 August for the final operations of World War 2. Along with six Avengers and eight Seafires, four Fireflies strafed Kizarazu airfield in the morning. Although 12 Zeros appeared, the Seafires dealt with them, shooting down eight for the loss of one. Back aboard *HMS Indefatigable*, hostilities against Japan ceased pending the signing of the articles of surrender.

The Fireflies remained active as they carried out searches of PoW camps and were engaged in dropping supplies for the prisoners. By mid-September 1945, all three Firefly day fighter squadrons were in Australia. 1770 Squadron had ceased opera-

tions since May and had disembarked at Schofields on 5 June. 1772 Squadron joined it on 18 September while 1771 Squadron was put ashore at Nowra on 13 September. 1770 and 1771 Squadrons soon disbanded, respectively on 30 September and 16 October. Only 1772 Squadron continued to exist for several months. It became part of the 7th CAG and embarked twice aboard *HMS Indefatigable*, on 18 December 1945 and on 31 January 1946. This last cruise led them back home where 1772 Squadron officially disbanded on arrival, on 10 March 1946.

NIGHT FIGHTERS

Night operations of the Luftwaffe shadowers and bombers highlighted the need for fleet protection at night. In response to a require-

ment for a night fighter version of the Firefly, Fairey modified a Mark I, Z1831, which appeared as the prototype NF.II in March 1943. The conversion to the NF.II configuration consisted in adding an Airborne Interception Mk.X radar. Transmitter and receiver antennas were housed in two separate radomes on the leading edges of the inner wing sections. The AI Mk.X radar required weighty equipment including additional generating power to be accommodated in the rear fuselage and to be used by the AI operator. To compensate for this extra weight and for the displacement of the centre of gravity, a further modification was introduced on the NF.II in the form of a 18 inch fuselage stretch, just behind the engine firewall.

The Admiralty placed a contract with Fairey for 328 NF.IIs but the production line



Firefly NF.1 PP557 was one of four night fighters forming the Black Flight of 812 Squadron. When not embarked on *HMS Ocean*, they were shore-based at Hal Far as seen here in September 1949



was brought to an end after only 37 had been built. Testing of the first NF.IIs highlighted their shortcomings. In addition to insoluble problems peculiar to the radar, the Firefly NF.II also needed improvements to its handling characteristics. The last obstacle was the number of modifications required which prevented easy production on the assembly line of the Mk.I versions.

At this time, rapid progress was being made in radar engineering and a more efficient and less heavy system became available. Fairey was allowed to use the American-built ASH radar (AN/APS-4) and to develop a night fighter variant of the Firefly around it. Installation of the ASH could be achieved with ease on the assembly line. The radar equipment was fitted in a single pod which was mounted - pointing slightly downwards - on a boom under the engine cowlings, as on the FR.I. This simple conversion was undertaken on 140 Firefly FR.Is which became NF.Is. The only notable external difference between the FR.I and NF.I versions was the presence of anti-glare shrouded exhausts. In addition, deck hooks had a light and the front cockpit received a slave ASH indicator for the pilot. Of course the ASH radar was always used in the air interception role rather than in the air to surface mode.

Not one Firefly NF.II was to see first-line squadron service. All were converted back to Mk.I standard. Before this conversion, some aircraft were assigned to 746 Squadron in February 1944, but they were soon superseded by Firefly NF.Is. This unit operated as the Naval Night Fighter Interception Unit and carried out operational trials of the future fleet night fighters.

When Firefly NF.Is were delivered to the NFIU, development of night fighter tactics was begun. As part of these experiments, a Firefly NF.I was detached occasionally during the autumn of 1944 to RAF Coltishall to deal with the Heinkel He 111 H-22s. Following the Allied landings and advance in France with the capture of the V1 launching sites, the Luftwaffe modified He 111s to air-launch V1 flying bombs and operated them from July 1944. They were based at Gilze-Rijen and Venlo in the Netherlands, before withdrawing to Germany in September. Due to the poor performance of these

old bombers carrying a large V1, the Luftwaffe faced great losses and was forced to use them by night. Only a few radar contacts were established by the Fireflies and only one, on 12 December, led to an interception. Lts P.H. Kneale and G.L. Davies chased a He 111 but were finally forced to abandon the pursuit after 35 minutes for lack of fuel.

746 Squadron also prepared carrier operations of the night fighter Fireflies. Pairs of aircraft were embarked aboard *HMS Smiler*, *Ravager*, *Searcher* and *Premier* for some short cruises between January and April 1945 and carried out operations in the North Sea and over Norway. Two Firefly NF.Is were also loaned to 882 Squadron in the spring of 1945 for convoy duties with *HMS Vindex*. With the radar, they also led strikes of single-seat fighters. The escort carriers proved inadequate for fully loaded Fireflies due to their short deck.

Further Firefly NF.Is were assigned to the Night Fighter Training School which had just been established at Drem in May 1945. The next step was the formation of squadrons dedicated to the night fighter role. On 1 January 1945, 1790 Squadron was commissioned at Burscough for this mission with Lt Cdr J.H. Kneale assuming command. Nevertheless the full complement of Firefly NF.Is was not reached before May, just before they embarked on board *HMS Puncher* for DLT. The arrival was on 25 May in a total absence of wind and the deck of the escort carrier was particularly short. The hook of the second aircraft to land, piloted by Sub-Lt E.B.A. Everett, struck the round down and flew through the barriers

A Firefly FR.1 of 767 Squadron which had the yellow code 'MV' for RNAS Milltown, a satellite airfield of Lossiemouth.

directly into the sea killing the observer, Sub-Lt P. Cariss. The remaining Fireflies returned ashore and joined the carrier on the following day.

The next month, 1790 Squadron received 18 new NF.Is which were craned on board *HMS Vindex*. The carrier sailed on 26 May and ferried 1790 Squadron to Australia to take part in attacks over the Japanese mainland with the BPF. Unfortunately, by the time the ship arrived and 1790 had settled in at Schofields, on 12 August, the war was drawing to an end. So the Firefly NF.Is never saw action.

Two other units, 1791 and 1792 Squadrons based at RNAS Lee-on-Solent, were equipped with 12 Firefly NF.Is in March and May 1945 respectively. However, neither could join the BPF before VJ-Day and both remained in the UK. Although 1791 Squadron disbanded on 23 September, 1790 and 1792 survived for a few months. 1790 remained at Schofields and was attached to the 8th Carrier Air Group for service on board *HMS Implacable*. When the carrier returned to the UK, 1790 Squadron disbanded on arrival on 3 June 1946. 1792 Squadron was chosen to join *HMS Ocean* the only night fighter carrier in the Royal Navy. It carried out a tour of duty in the Mediterranean from December 1945, returning to England on 17 April 1946 only to disband.

The importance of the night fighter role had become obvious and Firefly NF.Is were reintroduced to front-line squadrons. Units flying FR.Is were selected to receive a specialised detachment of four NF.Is, called the Black Flight. On 26 May 1946, 816 Squadron became the first of this new type of unit when a flight of four Firefly NF.Is was attached to it. Unfortunately one night fighter was lost only three days later. The Black Flight accompanied 816 Squadron when it embarked on board *HMS Ocean* for the Mediterranean cruise. Between 1 November 1946 and 29 March 1947, the Black Flight was transferred to 805 Squadron as their Seafires were suspended from carrier operations until new models arrived.

Black Flights also replaced four FR.Is from 812 Squadron in July 1948 and from 827 Squadron in June 1949, these units operating with *HMS Ocean* and *Triumph*



A Firefly FR.1 of 827 Squadron taking off from *HMS Triumph* during a Mediterranean cruise in 1947.



Above: Firefly FR.1s of 816 Squadron flew formation in 1945. It was the first unit to become operational on radar-equipped Fireflies shortly before the end of the war in the Pacific. Right: The same aircraft, same unit, three years later. 816 Squadron was some weeks away from being disbanded but later reformed as a Royal Australian Navy unit still flying Firefly FR.1s.

respectively. Although the NF.1s survived the arrival of Firefly Mk.5s in 812 Squadron, all units deleted their night fighters before departing for Korea.

RADAR FIREFLY

The fitting of an ASH radar enhanced the reconnaissance and strike capabilities of the Firefly. The radar was housed in a pod under the engine cowling while the equipment was placed in the rear cockpit. As for the Firefly NF.1, the pod front cover was fibreglass and, to prevent collapsing in flight, the whole enclosure was pressurised via a small valve on the rear cover, this operation being done by a foot pump. The installation was tested on Firefly Z1970 which became the prototype for the FR.1.

In total 236 Firefly FR.1s were built. As the fighter role on board the Royal Navy carriers was left to the Seafire or to the American Corsairs and Hellcats, several Firefly F.1s were converted to FR.1 standard with an American AN/APS-4 radar and were given the designation F.1A.

Fairey Barracudas had succeeded antiquated Swordfishes for only five months when 816 Squadron received 18 Firefly FR.1s on 1 July 1945. The work up was concluded at Machrihanish during the autumn and winter. It included a three-week deck-landing period on board *HMS Nairana* during which, on 9 December 816 Squadron was involved in the sinking of two surrendered Kriegsmarine submarines.

816 Squadron then embarked on *HMS Theseus* in February and in May 1946,



before it was attached to the 20th Carrier Air Group for operations with *HMS Ocean*. In the meantime, the unit complement was reduced to 12 Firefly FR.1s in June but, during the previous month, a Black Flight of four Firefly NF.1s has been added.

816 and 805 Squadrons rejoined *HMS Ocean* on 18 June 1946 for a tour in the Mediterranean which kept them away from home for more than two years. When not engaged in exercises or cruises which included visits to several foreign ports the units were shore-based at Hal Far, Malta.

In 1947 they were involved in the search for illegal Jewish immigrant ships. On 24 April, six Firefly FR.1s carried out a reconnaissance in the Sicilian Narrows and Straits of Messina as the *SS President Warfield* had left Marseilles with illegal immigrants and was expected to pass through. Further searches were conducted until the end of May. After the summer cruise, *HMS Ocean* was again involved in the blockade of Palestine against Jewish immigration and operated off the Palestinian coast during

October.

As the formation of Israel drew nearer and the British mandate ended on midnight 14 May, the situation in Palestine deteriorated and *HMS Ocean* sailed again to this area on 7 May 1948 to cover the total withdrawal of British forces, and was off Haifa on 10 May. The Fireflies carried out reconnaissances and, from 12 May as the Army began to leave its positions, was kept on readiness to provide cover if requested. When the evacuation was successfully accomplished, *HMS Ocean* returned to Malta. The following month, she finally sailed for home. 816 Squadron disembarked at Lee-on-Solent on 28 June 1948 and disbanded three days later.

The second unit to receive Firefly FR.1s was 822 Squadron. It had been intended to join the BPF with its radar-equipped Barracudas but the war ended before embarkation took place and Fireflies were issued during September 1945. Based at Burscough, 822 Squadron moved to Machrihanish on 17 December where it spent the winter. Due to the post-war

Firefly MB750 was converted for pilot training duties and acted as the prototype for the Firefly T.1. It was then used by Fairey as a demonstrator receiving an aluminium overall paint scheme with a black anti-glare upper fuselage surface.

strength reductions, 822 Squadron's association with the Firefly was curtailed when it disbanded on 19 February 1946.

Another short-lived unit was 824 Squadron. Back home from Ceylon, 824 Squadron began to transition onto Firefly FR.1s at the end of October 1945 at RNAS Ayr. Having moved to Burscough on 18 December, it disbanded there on 4 January 1946.

Among the first units to equip with Firefly FR.1s was 837 Squadron. Having disembarked its Barracudas from *HMS Glory* at Jervis Bay, Australia, when the Pacific war ended, 837 Squadron took delivery of Fireflies in October 1945. After completing their work-up at Nowra and Williamtown, 837 Squadron joined *HMS Glory* on 10 June 1946 for a spell in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This long tour included several shore deployments at Trincomalee, Kai Tak and Sembawang. The carrier finally returned home after a tour around Australia during the summer of 1947 and, on arrival, 837 Squadron disbanded on 6 October 1947.

814 Squadron was another unit to hand over its Barracudas for the new Firefly FR.1s. Also based in Australia, 814 Squadron re-equipped in January 1946 at Schofields and then embarked aboard *HMS Venerable* on 13 March which sailed for Ceylon. The Fireflies were shore based at Katukurunda and Trincomalee until re-embarkation took place on 20 September for a tour to Singapore and Hong Kong. On 14 February 1947, 814 Squadron transferred from *HMS Venerable* to *HMS Glory* for pas-

Firefly T.1 Z2027, painted in high visibility yellow, was converted from a Firefly F.1 of the first batch produced and featured the low cockpit hood. Otherwise with all cannon deleted it represented the standard T.1 model.



sage home. Settling down at RNAS Eglinton on 26 March, 814 Squadron flew from the shore base until rejoining *HMS Vengeance* on 23 September. The carrier disembarked the whole unit at Hal Far on 11 November. 814 Squadron remained ashore until the personnel returned home aboard the *SS Otranto* in March 1948, leaving the Firefly FR.1s at Malta as by then it was to re-equip with a new variant.

812 Squadron which had been in the Pacific area since the summer of 1945, was disembarked at Schofields on 12 January 1946 where Firefly FR.1s were taken on charge as replacements for the Barracudas. After the crews had trained on their new aircraft, 812 Squadron joined *HMS Vengeance* on 19 March for passage to Ceylon. The unit remained at Katukurunda until 15 July when they sailed for home; reaching Lee-on-Solent on 12 August only to disband.

812 Squadron soon reformed, on 1 October 1946, again with Firefly FR.1s but this time based at RNAS Eglinton and attached to *HMS Theseus*. On 7 February 1947, 812 Squadron was cleared to join its carrier for a cruise in the Far East which included deployments at Trincomalee, Butterworth, Sembawang, Point Cook and

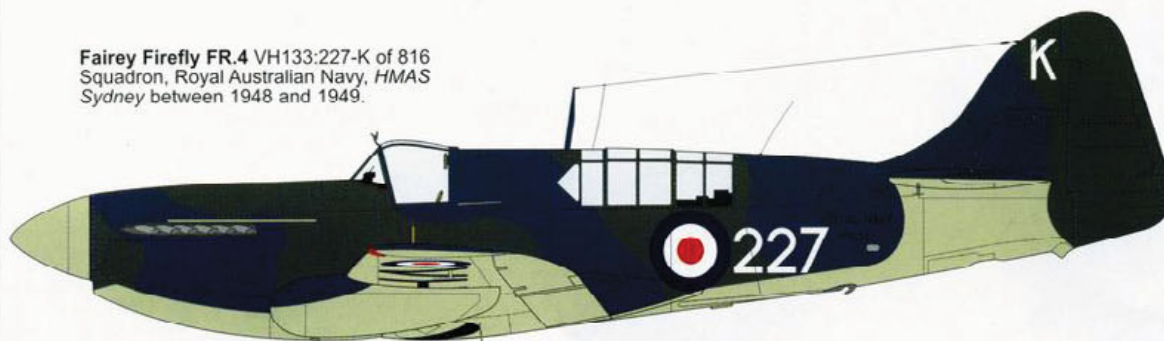
Kai Tak. While the ship was on passage from Melbourne to Sydney, a tragic accident befell 812 Squadron. On 20 July, two Fireflies collided during a formation drill and both aircraft spun into the sea, killing Lt Cdr M. Heathe, Lts K. Sellan and R. Walker and CPO W. Lovatt. *HMS Vengeance* returned to Trincomalee on 23 November and then set sail for home. 812 Squadron landed back at Ford on 20 December and prepared to transition onto a new Firefly variant, the Mark 4, which had arrived by mid-February 1948.

The last unit to fly the Firefly FR.1 was 827 Squadron when, on 15 August 1946, it was officially reformed at Eglinton. Having completed the work-up, 827 Squadron embarked aboard *HMS Triumph* on 13 January 1947, the carrier proceeding to the Mediterranean the following month. She remained in the area for two years and operated along *HMS Ocean* on many occasions. While not embarked, 827 Squadron was put ashore at Hal Far.

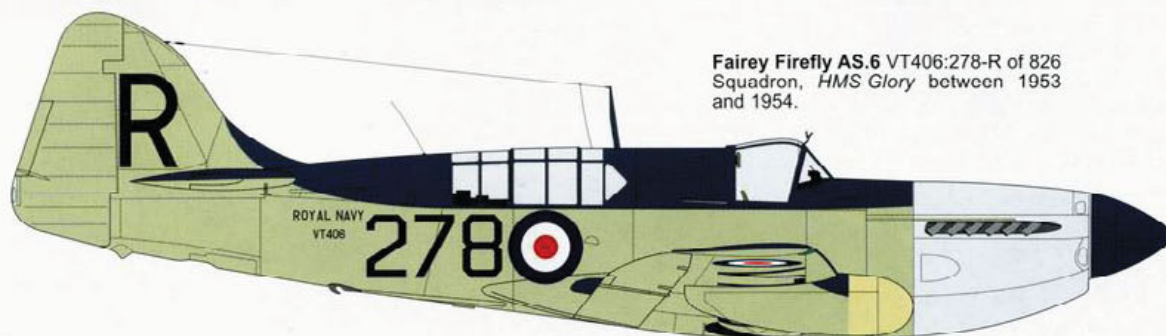
HMS Triumph was involved in the final stage of the British forces evacuation from Palestine. On 29 June 1948, the carrier was off Haifa and launched Fireflies and Seafires over the area. The naval aircraft remained on



Fairey Firefly FR.4 VH133:227-K of 816 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Sydney between 1948 and 1949.



Fairey Firefly AS.6 VT406:278-R of 826 Squadron, HMS Glory between 1953 and 1954.



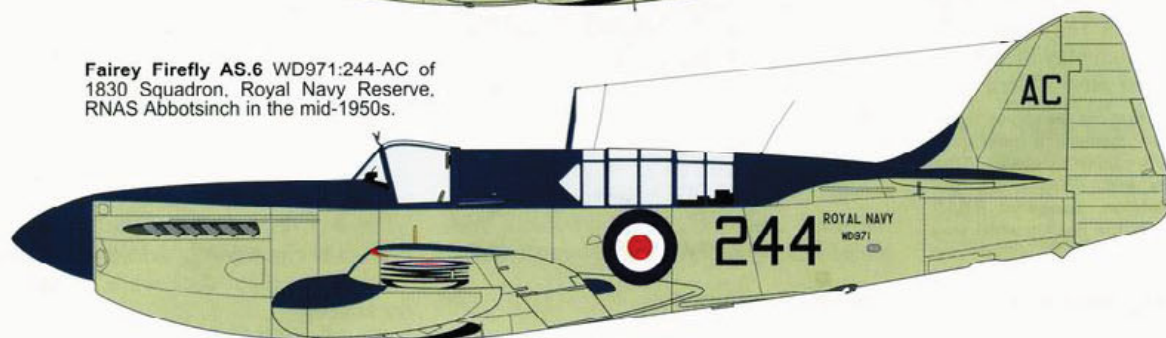
Fairey Firefly FR.5 VT504:965-NW of 724 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy, Nowra, NSW, between 1955 and 1956.



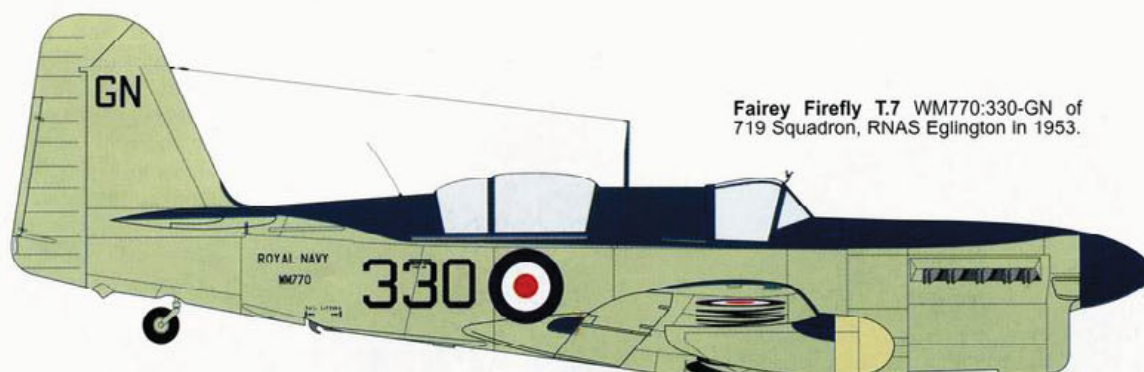
Fairey Firefly FR.5 WB259:288-J of 703A Flight which used ex-825 Squadron aircraft between February and June 1954.



Fairey Firefly AS.6 WD971:244-AC of 1830 Squadron, Royal Navy Reserve, RNAS Abbotsinch in the mid-1950s.



Fairey Firefly T.7 WM770:330-GN of 719 Squadron, RNAS Eglinton in 1953.





Firefly Z2118 was the second Mk.4 prototype. Conversion consisted of fitting leading edge radiators and a Griffon 72 engine driving a four-bladed propeller. In a later phase, a dorsal fin was added and the wings were clipped. Finally, underwing radar and fuel tanks appeared.

readiness and carried out armed reconnaissances until the last troopships left the harbour on 30 June. At the end of the Mediterranean cruise, 827 Squadron returned home in February 1949, reaching Donibristle on 16 March.

After a short rest ashore, 827 rejoined *HMS Triumph* on 25 April 1948, this time for a spell in the Far East. The carrier first operated around Malta from May before setting sail for the Far East on 4 August. 827

As all Firefly T.2s were tactical weapons trainers, MB752 retained two cannon, a gyro gun-sight and provision for underwing stores. This aircraft was in service with 1833 Squadron, RNVR, Midland Air Division, based at RNAS Bramcote. The Harvard in the background was used for basic training.

Squadron visited Hong Kong in September then was put ashore at Sembawang, Singapore, on 3 October. With RAF aircraft, they participated in the air offensive against Communist terrorists in Malaya. A first strike was carried out on 21 October and another attack was launched two days later. 827 Squadron re-embarked aboard *HMS Triumph* on 1 November but on 8 December, they were back in Singapore for a second series of strikes over Malaya. Until the end of January 1950, the Fireflies rocketed and strafed bandit camps and suspected hiding places. 827 Squadron returned aboard *HMS Triumph* on 4 February and continued its cruise to the Philippines, Australia and Japan until the Korean war broke out. At the end of its war operations, 827 Squadron returned to Ford and disbanded on 22 November 1950.

The old Firefly FR.1s survived in a first line unit until 1952. Two machines had joined 827 Squadron - then a torpedo strike

unit flying Blackburn Firebrands - in August 1951 - to act as navigation leader aircraft for night strike missions. 827 Squadron performed the first night torpedo attacks by single-seat aircraft; a Firefly FR.1 found the target with its ASH radar and a Firebrand acted as illuminator with flares while the others launched their torpedoes.

TRAINING ROLES

To assist FAA pilots in the more advanced stages of operational training, it was decided to develop a dual control trainer version of the Firefly. The manufacturer completely redesigned the fuselage in order to offer two separate cockpits with canopies. The aft cockpit, for the instructor, was mounted high and was equipped with only basic controls and instruments. Entry to both cockpits was by means of a sliding canopy. The raised instructor's position provided a reasonable view of the flight deck while on approach for landing.

The first FR.1 airframe, which was converted to the trainer variant, was serialised MB750 and flew in July 1946 from Ringway, Manchester. It was seconded by another FR.1, fitted with a mock-up of the aft cockpit, which was intended for aerodynamic and spin trials and first flew on 29 May. Tests to assess the trainer's capabilities for conversion and deck-landing training proved successful and the Royal Navy ordered the modification of 34 airframes to T.1 standard. The first production T.1 made its initial flight on 1 September 1947. The Firefly T.1s had all armament deleted although the first nine of them were fitted with two 20 mm cannon before armament



was considered useless for conversion and deck-landing practice. Included in the modifications was the removal of all internal ASV gear. All Firefly T.1s were powered by a Griffon XII.

In 1949 Fairey produced the Firefly T.2 in response to a request for a tactical weapons trainer. The T.2 was basically a T.1 with modifications to suit it for use as an operational pilot trainer. Changes included the fitting of a gyro gunsight in both cockpits and the keeping of two 20 mm cannons from the FR.1 airframes. The Firefly T.2 could also carry external stores like bombs, mines or flares.

The first conversion to T.2 was MB543 and flew for the first time on 12 August 1949. The conversion programme involved 57 airframes for the Fleet Air Arm. The Firefly T.2s supplemented the T.1s in the main flying schools.

Initially, Firefly T.1s were assigned to 736 Squadron, the Naval Air Fighter School at St Merryn, in July 1948 and were operated until February 1950 when they were replaced by Sea Furies. Later, in the early fifties, Firefly T.1s and T.2s were introduced in the general, rather than specialist, training scheme of the Royal Navy. All pupils converted from the Harvard to the Firefly T.1. They received 70 hours flying in the three months' course which was carried out in either by 764 or 766 Squadrons, both based at RNAS Lossiemouth and part of the Operational Flying School. After completion of the OFS Part I course, the students were then split; fighter pilots going to the Naval Air Fighter School and the strike/anti-submarine pilots to the Naval Air Anti-Submarine School at Eglinton. They then completed OFS Part II course which took a further three months. 737 and 744 Squadrons formed the NAASS and used Firefly trainers in different ways. Instrument flying and anti-submarine weapons training was provided at Eglinton with Firefly T.2s. Eventually, Firefly trainers were replaced by Sea Vampires and Gannets from the mid-fifties.

Nevertheless, Firefly trainers continued with several miscellaneous units. Acting as high speed communications aircraft, Firefly T.1s and T.2s were issued to 781 and 782 Squadrons. With 799 Squadron and with the Admiralty Flight they provided refresher courses for senior officers. Those allocated to 767 Squadron carried out deck-landing



Above: Firefly T.2 MB578 was delivered in 1951 to the Station Flight at Eglinton where it provided useful service until 1956. Below: 796 Squadron based at St. Merryn, was the only operator of the Firefly T.3. This trainer variant appeared inadequate for the job, with only one trainee observer on board against two in the Barracuda or Firefly T.7 which had taken over from the T.3s by mid-1954. PP433 seen here, curiously kept its cannon and had anti-glare exhausts.



control officer training. There also were two front-line units which received at least one Firefly T.1. The last important user was 765 Squadron, the Piston Engine Pilot Pool Unit at RNAS Culdrose, which continued to use the Firefly until disbandment in March 1957.

In the late forties, with the availability of surplus Firefly FR.1s replaced in the first-line squadrons by Sea Furies and Firefly FR.4s, it was decided to use them as observer and ASW trainers, replacing the ageing Barracudas. The Firefly T.3 was identical with the FR.1 except that the armament was removed but it retained the ASH radar. The number converted is uncertain but there

were only a few aircraft. Firefly T.3s only equipped one unit; 796 Squadron, the Observers School based at St Merryn, from July 1950. They proved unsatisfactory in ASW training as they could only accommodate one trainee observer in the rear cockpit against two in the Barracuda. In June 1953 the Firefly T.3 was superseded by the three-seater Firefly T.7. Some Firefly T.3s were also diverted to RNVR squadrons which were waiting for the delivery of Firefly AS.6s. Most units of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, both fighter and anti-submarine, operated a small number of Firefly T.1s, T.2s and T.3s for training purposes, along with Harvards.

A NEW SHAPE, THE MK.4

As early as 1943, Fairey investigated ways to improve the Firefly's performance. Fairey retained a Mk.1 airframe, serialised Z1835, for the installation of the latest Griffon engine development; the two-stage supercharged Mk.61 of 1,900 hp. The new engine required a redesigning of the radiator to provide adequate cooling. The annular cowling was enlarged and the two carburettor intakes on each side of the radiator disappeared.

Firefly TW695 was sent to Rolls Royce at Hucknall where it was fitted with contra-rotating propellers in an attempt to reduce torque as more powerful engines appeared for the Firefly Mk.4 and also to ease night operations from aircraft carriers.





Left: This Firefly F.1 received underwing nacelles for test purposes. They differed in shape from those intended for the Mk.4. The aircraft also featured clipped wings. Below left: Firefly T.4 TW692 stayed with Fairey for demonstration purposes travelling to the Middle East in 1948. Although Egypt and Iraq showed interest, no order materialised. It is seen here, with additional long range tanks, before departure.

the fin leading edge in order to improve lateral stability.

Two prototypes, serialised Z1835 - which previously served as the prototype Mk.III - and Z2118, were re-built from Mk.I airframes. Z1835 had first received a Griffon 71 in September 1943 before modification to the Mk.IV was applied from August 1944. This aircraft was used by Rolls-Royce at Hucknall and was successively fitted with a Griffon 61, 71 and 72. The increase in horsepower offered by the Griffon 72 engine and the design modifications greatly improved the Firefly's performance; top speed reaching 367 mph at 14,000 ft.

The second prototype first flew on 25 May 1945. The modification programme was carried out in several stages. A Griffon 72 and leading edge radiators were initially grafted onto Z2118 and subsequently the new tailfin and the clipped wings were introduced. It was then modified to the FR.4 version by the fitting of a nacelle containing an ASH radar carried on the starboard wing and balanced by another nacelle for auxiliary fuel, with a capacity of 55 gallons, on the port wing. It also featured, for the first time, clipped wingtips.

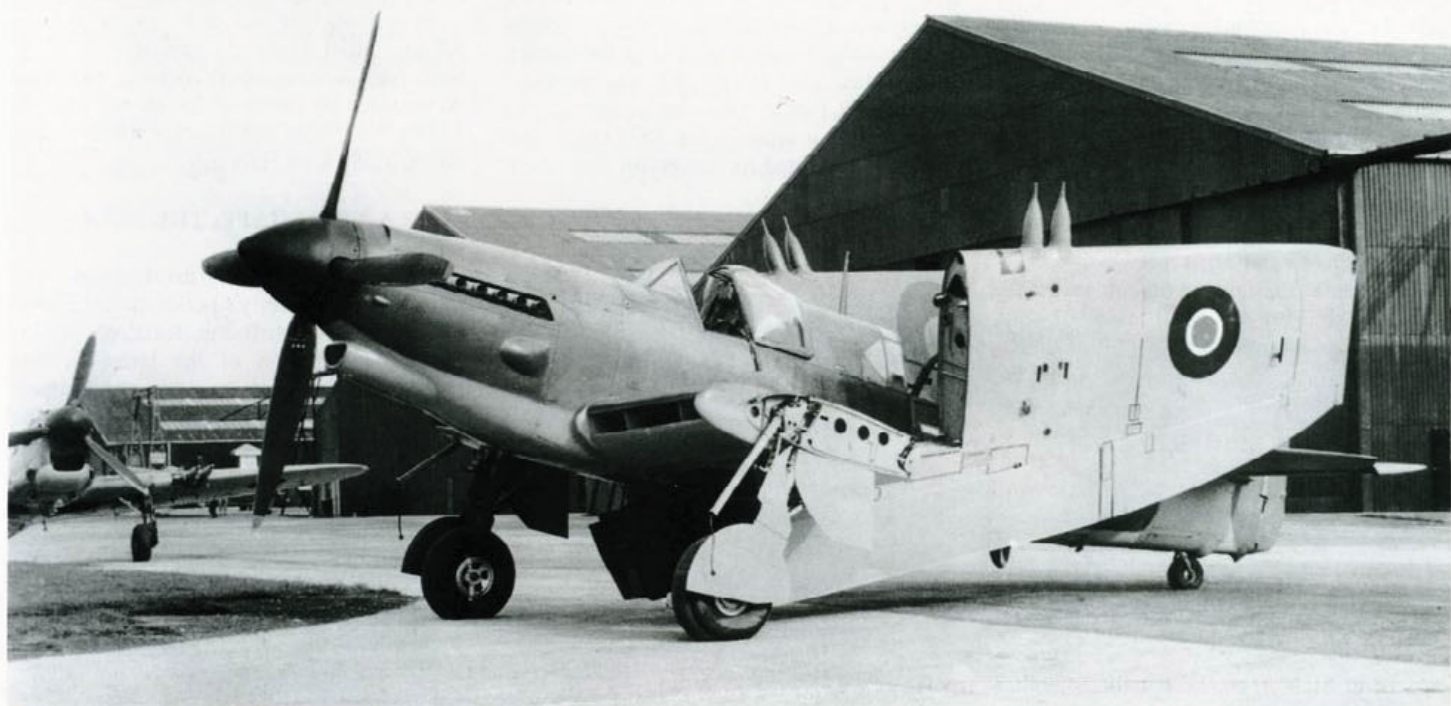
Two further Firefly Mk.IIs, MB649 and PP482, joined the Mark 4 development programme by receiving Griffon 72s and other modifications. MB649 flew on 21 February 1946 and acted as a prototype for the night fighter variant. Although no wing radar nacelle was mounted, this machine tested an anti-glare exhaust. Despite 123 NF.4s being **Firefly Mk.4 prototype Z2118 was still waiting for its radar and underwing fuel tanks. The main difference between the prototype and the first production batch of Mk.4s was the larger size of the carburettor air intake.**



Designated Firefly Mk.III, this aircraft undertook a test programme which revealed handling problems. The large radiator generated aerodynamic alterations which affected the aircraft's directional control and longitudinal stability. Although 100 Firefly Mk.III's had been ordered, Fairey was unable to pursue development of this version.

Problems encountered with the 'beard' type radiator were rectified by adopting a completely new arrangement for the cooling system. A Mark I airframe was fitted with a mock-up of a leading edge radiator in each

inner wing and was test-flown from the spring of 1944. This solution proved successful; turbulence problems were solved but also performance was enhanced. Fairey went further ahead and was allowed to fit four Mk.I airframes with a Griffon 72 and leading edge radiators. The design team also refined and perfected the aircraft, later designated the Firefly Mk.4. The engine drove a four-bladed propeller. To improve the Firefly's roll characteristics, clipped wingtips were adopted which reduced the span to 41 ft 2 in. A dorsal fin was added to





initially ordered, no such models were actually built. As part of the night fighter development, one of the first Firefly Mk.4s built, TW695, was fitted with contra-rotating propeller in order to cancel out torque and to ease deck take-offs.

Fairey received contracts to produce 293 Firefly Mk.4s, including the conversion of 53 Mark Is from a previous order and not yet assembled. The production version of the FR.4 only differed from the prototypes by the introduction of the 1,900 hp Griffon 74 engine and the extension beneath the engine bay of the small nose carburettor intake; but some early machines retained the original intake. The first production FR.4, TW687, made its initial flight on 25 May 1946. A batch of 133 aircraft was cancelled from the initial order, due to the end of the war.

The first Firefly Mk.4s were allotted to the Royal Canadian Navy in August 1947 and the first FAA examples were available for 810 Squadron when it reformed on 1 October. The squadron worked up at Eglinton until its embarkation aboard *HMS Implacable* on 4 May 1948 for ten days of DLT. During the summer 810 Squadron settled down at Donibristle and was then attached to *HMS Theseus*.

The first cruise aboard the light fleet carrier took place from 20 August 1948 and took the Firefly FR.4s to South Africa. The arrival aboard *HMS Theseus* was marred by the loss of two aircraft. Lt Sobey's Firefly hit the rounddown with the mainwheels and was thrown into the barriers, breaking off the tailplane of the aircraft piloted by Lt Dennis who had just landed. 810 Squadron participated in three further spells of duty on board *HMS Theseus* during the first half of 1949. The remainder of the year was spent ashore at St Merryn, except for a deploy-

ment in Germany in October. Returning to the UK on 16 October, 810 Squadron disbanded the next day only to immediately reform as an anti-submarine unit.

The second FAA unit to receive Firefly FR.4s was 812 Squadron on 15 January 1948, but after a mere six months they were superseded by Mark 5s. The third and last front-line squadron to fly the Firefly Mk.4

The first Firefly Mk.4s were converted on the production line from Mk.1 airframes. Both of these aircraft display the type of nose air intake first adopted before an extended ram-air intake was introduced to improve aerodynamic shape.

was 814 Squadron. Arriving from Malta without aircraft, 814 Squadron took delivery of Firefly FR.4s at Eglinton from April 1948. They embarked on 16 August for a



Above: Firefly Mk. 4 VG968 joined 778 Squadron at Lee-on-Solent to carry out intensive operational flight testing. The Service Trials Unit was amongst the first squadrons to receive new aircraft entering FAA service. The underwing nacelles were removed. Below: Firefly FR.4, VG980 of 737 Squadron featured the two-colour upper surface finish whilst another aircraft in the background had the new paint scheme. 737 Squadron was part of the Naval Anti-Submarine School based at Eglinton





tour to South Africa aboard *HMS Vengeance*. Three other cruises were carried out with this carrier, including a trip to the Arctic Circle, but from January 1949 Firefly Mk.5s appeared and had completely replaced the FR.4s by August.

DUTCH FIREFLIES

During the war, several Dutch pilots made their way to the UK where they joined the RAF or the Fleet Air Arm. In June 1943, a Dutch-manned unit, 860 Squadron, formed and operated Swordfishes. This squadron was to form the nucleus of the post-war Marine Luchtvaartdienst. When VJ-day occurred, 860 Squadron was flying Barracudas and had to give them back to Great Britain. The Dutch placed an order for 30 Firefly F.Is, becoming the first foreign customer.

The first six Fireflies were delivered on 18 January 1946 and equipped 860 Squadron which reformed at RNAS Ayr under British control before transferring to MLD service. In May 1946, 860 Squadron moved to St Merryn where work-up was pursued until the planned return to the Netherlands. To fill the gap pending the arrival of the MLD's own light fleet carrier, the Royal Navy escort carrier *HMS Nairana* was loaned in March 1946 and was renamed *HrMs Karel Doorman*. Four months later, on 27 July, 860 Squadron embarked and, after a visit to the Netherlands, sailed on 26 August 1946 for the Dutch East Indies, where Indonesian nationalists had been causing trouble since the Japanese surrender.

All 30 Firefly F.Is had been delivered in 1946, allowing the formation of 861 Squadron on 16 September 1946. After work-up with the Royal Navy at Dale, 861

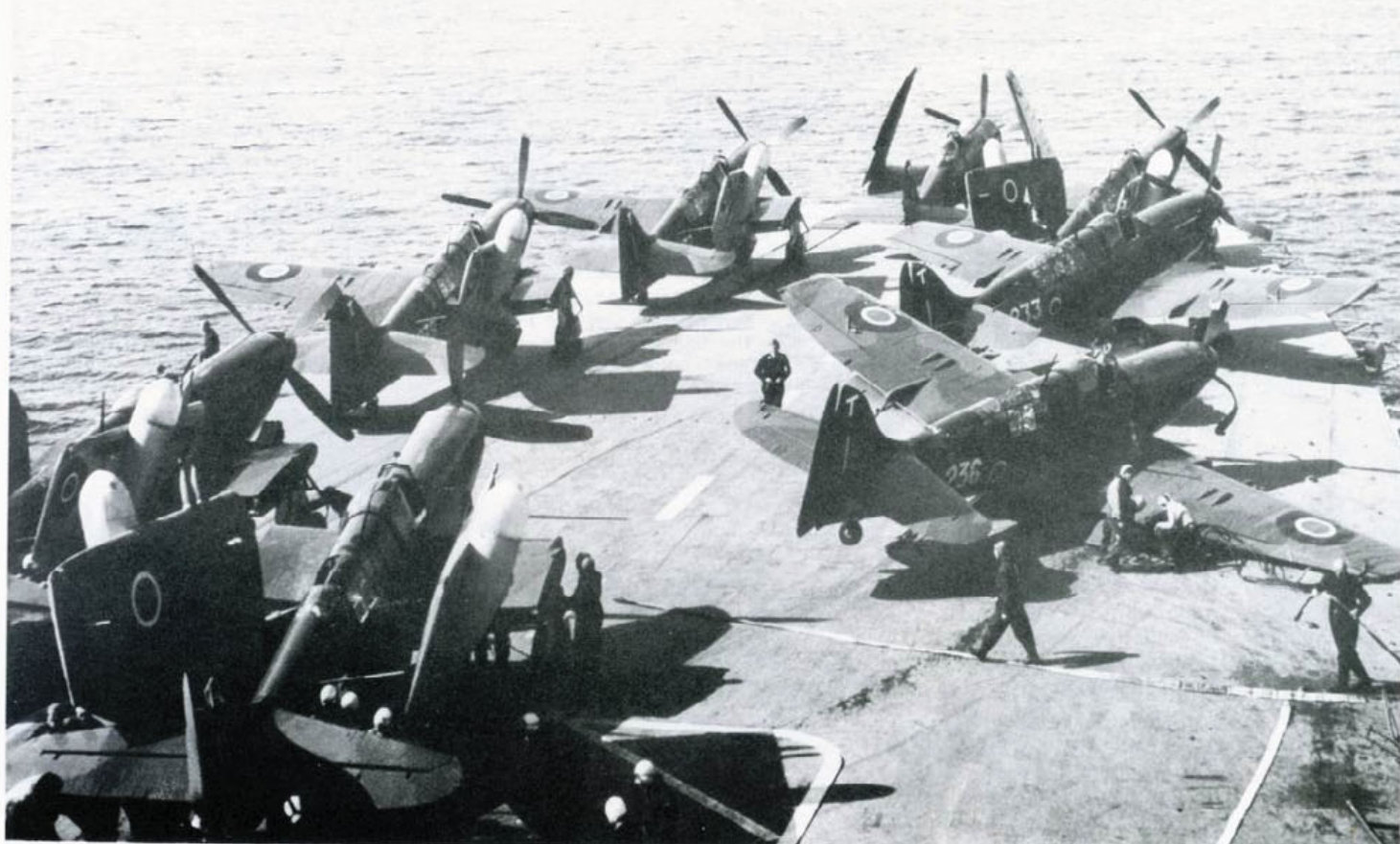
This brand new Firefly Mk.4 displaying its pleasant lines rid of the nose radiator of the earlier marks and without underwing nacelles. Despite total production of 293 only three front line squadrons flew FR.4s.

Squadron joined *HrMs Karel Doorman* on 22 February and sailed to the Netherlands. 861 Squadron disbanded shortly after its arrival.

In the meantime, 860 Squadron had arrived in the Dutch East Indies and aircraft had been put ashore at Kemajoran near Batavia (now Jakarta) on 12 October 1946. The carrier returned home in December 1946 leaving the Fireflies at Socrabaja. During the three following years, 860 Squadron was employed on police and counter-insurgency duties as well as supplying support for the Army which was dealing with Indonesian nationalists in Central and East Java. The major operations began on 21 July 1947 and ceased on 4 August. Three Fireflies were lost during these operations; two being downed by enemy fire. The Netherlands finally recognised the independence of the Republic of Indonesia on 27 December 1949, bringing hostilities to an end. On 15 March 1950, 860 Squadron disbanded and the 11 remaining Firefly F.Is were shipped for passage home. Back from Indonesia 860 Squadron reformed in July 1950 with Sea Furies.

The first *Karel Doorman* was returned to the UK in March 1948 and the light fleet carrier (ex-*HMS Venerable*) was commissioned as the new *HrMs Karel Doorman* two months later. This carrier was insulated for tropical service. In the meantime 40 Firefly FR.4s had been acquired by the Netherlands

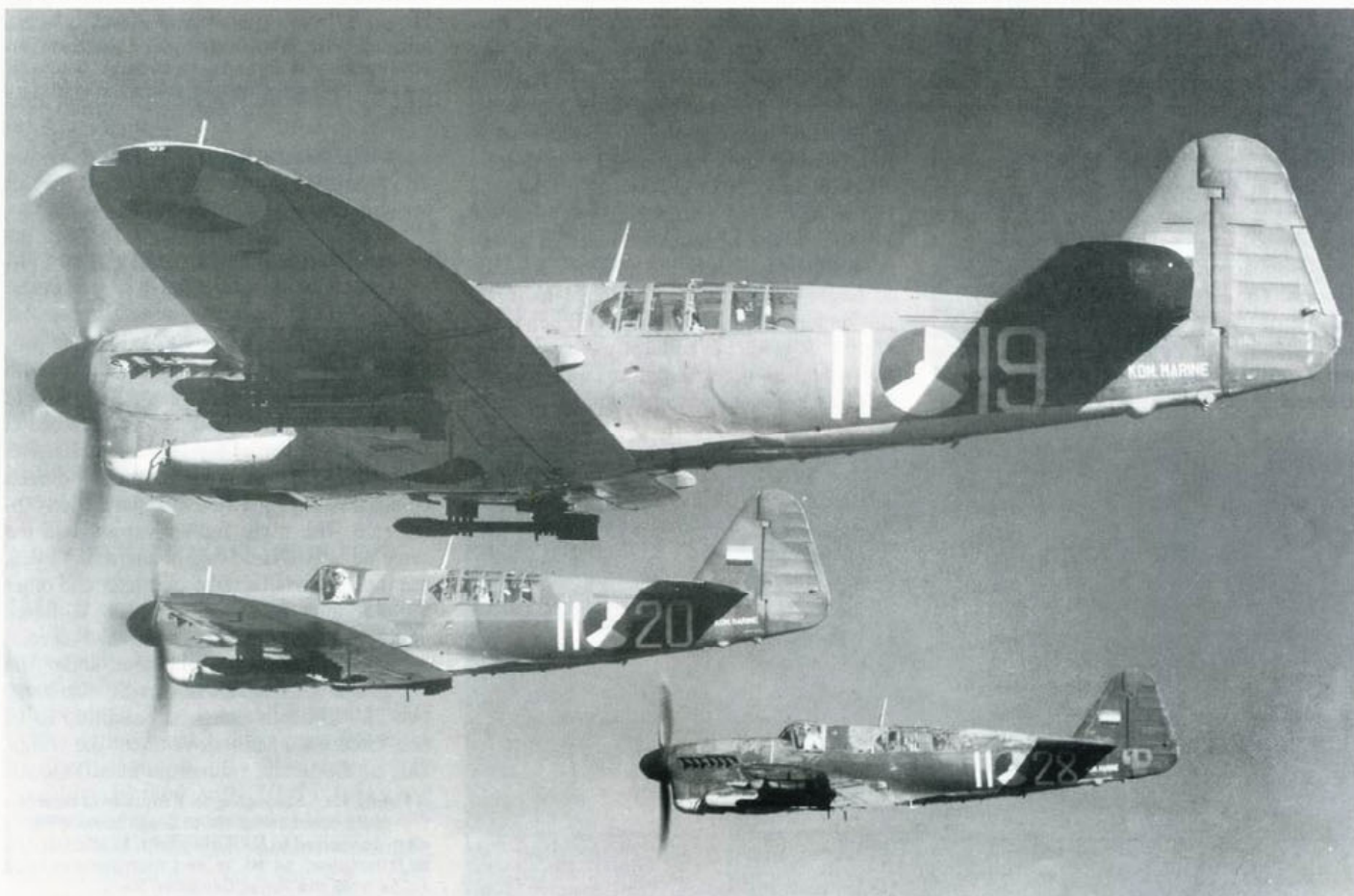
This Firefly FR.4 of 810 Squadron missed the arrestor wires and flew through the barrier ending up in the aircraft parked on the forward deck of *HMS Theseus*.





Above: The Maltese people like nothing better than a good spectacle. They gathered in their hundreds along the roads surrounding Grand Harbour when it was made known that for the very first time a Firefly FR.5 of 812 Squadron was to be launched from the carrier anchored there using rocket assisted take-off gear

(RATOG). Lightly loaded the aircraft landed a few minutes later at Hal Far. Below: Firefly F.1s of the Dutch Marine Luchtvaartdienst. The code 'P' stood for Konvooi (Patrol) which identified the aircraft's role. These were later changed to numerals '16' being the equivalent.





Above: 7 Squadron of the MLD was commissioned at Biak, Dutch New Guinea on 4 July 1955 with a mixed complement of 14 Firefly 4s and 5s for maritime patrols. The squadron was the last front-line unit flying Fireflies until December 1961.

and began to equip new MLD units from the spring of 1947. Later, several Firefly FR.4s were converted to Mk.5 standard.

The expeditious disbanding of 860 Squadron had allowed the formation of 1 Squadron, aimed for service in the Netherlands Antilles, with some Firefly F.Is pending the arrival of the complement of FR.4s. Karel Doorman with Fireflies of 1 Squadron aboard arrived at Curaçao on 22 January 1952. Twelve Fireflies were stationed at Hato while the remaining aircraft were based at Parera. All was going well until two Fireflies were tragically and accidentally lost on 14 October 1952. From July 1957, the Fireflies were gradually superseded by Avengers.

Formed on 17 October 1949, 2 Squadron worked as the pool for the other Firefly units, at some point also counting 4 and 5 Squadrons at Valkenburg in the Netherlands and 7 Squadron in Biak, Netherlands New Guinea. The Fireflies of 7 Squadron arrived at Boeroehoe on 4 July 1955 and operated until Hawker Hunters took over the operations in 1961; Fireflies stopping flying on 15 December 1961. By this time, all the



Fireflies in the Netherlands had been scrapped.

The MLD had also ordered night fighter versions of the Firefly, receiving 14 NF.5s in March 1949. These aircraft were despatched to different units in the Netherlands. The final acquisition consisting of four Firefly AS.5s from RCN surplus which reached the Netherlands in March 1953. From 1954, the Fireflies in the home-based units gave way to Avengers and only the aircraft converted to target-towing duties continued to fly in the Netherlands; five of them still being airworthy in 1961. Seven Firefly F.Is and eight FR.4s had been converted as target tugs by Fokker. When they were withdrawn from

Above: A line-up of 7 Squadron's Fireflies. From August 1957 fin flashes were deleted and the inscription 'KON MARINE' was added. Each aircraft received a three-figure code on the nose, beneath the port wing and above the starboard wing.

front-line service, several Firefly F.Is were also converted as five T.1s and two T.2 trainers with conversion kits from Faireys.

ANTI-SUBMARINE FIREFLIES AS.MK.5/6

The Firefly Mk.5 was the next version produced and was basically an FR.4 with enhanced internal equipment. Contrary to the Mk. 4, the Firefly Mk.5 was produced in three main variants; fighter-reconnaissance, night fighter and anti-submarine, and each could be easily modified to assume each others role. The night fighter variant had the same radar and radio equipment as the FR.5, but it also carried a radio altimeter and other night-flying equipment such as a flame damping manifold. The AS.5 had special submarine detection equipment under the wings and the fuselage and could also carry two 250 lb depth charges in addition to 12 non-directional sonobuoys under the wings. Due to the Soviet submarine threat, the AS

A Firefly FR.5 belonging to 7 Squadron near the end of its operational life at Biak. Several FR.4s were converted to Mk.5 standard. In addition the MLD acquired 14 NF.5s and four second-hand AS.5s from the Royal Canadian Navy.





Left: A formation of three Firefly FR.4-5s probably belonging to 1 Squadron which had been flying Firefly F.1s from Hato, Dutch Antilles since 25 January 1952. They re-equipped with FR.4-5s in 1955. Below left: The New Guinea-based Fireflies were used by 7 Squadron mainly for patrols off the Indonesian archipelago. Several aircraft had their guns removed.



leave. Next month, re-equipped with Firefly AS.6s, they moved to Henstridge and prepared to work with *HMS Eagle*. The first embarkation took place on 4 September, the ship working in the North Sea, along with *HMS Illustrious*.

Next year, 812 Squadron was attached to *HMS Theseus* and embarked on 20 January 1953. They operated in the Gibraltar area and in the Mediterranean, in company with *HMS Eagle* and *Indomitable*. They returned home on 18 March and settled down at RNAS Eglinton. Two further spells aboard *HMS Eagle* took place in July and September before 812 Squadron disbanded, on 20 October 1953.

From February 1949, 814 Squadron began to receive Firefly FR.5s which progressively replaced the FR.4s within a period of six months. Still attached to *HMS Vengeance*, 814 Squadron undertook six cruises aboard this carrier in the following two years. 814 Squadron disbanded on 19 November 1950 but reformed, only three days later, at Culdrose again.

Delivery of Firefly AS.6s was delayed until January 1951 and in the meantime the unit flew on with Firefly FR.1s. Having completed the work-up on their new Firefly AS.6s, 814 Squadron rejoined *HMS Vengeance* on 10 May 1951, as part of the 7th Night Air Group with the Sea Hornet NF.21s of 809 Squadron. Despite the sea trials of this all-weather CAG they were rewarded by the presentation of the Boyd Trophy in 1951 for 814 Squadron; the 7th Night Air Group disbanded in June at the end of the cruise.

814 Squadron's next embarkation was aboard *HMS Theseus* in October and December 1951. The association was short as 814 Squadron then transferred to *HMS Eagle*, the first embarkation taking place on 9 June 1952 after a long period ashore at different stations. In addition to 814 Squadron, the *Eagle's* Air Group also included the Firefly FR.4s on board *HrMs Karel Doorman*. All long range tanks were painted Sky without any anti-dazzle black. All Valkenburg squadrons (1, 2, 4, 860 and 861 Squadrons) flew from the *Karel Doorman* for operational periods of duty.

version should have played a preponderant role but the Korean War gave opportunities for the FR.5 to show its strike capabilities.

The first Firefly Mk.5 made its initial flight on 12 December 1947 and eventually Mark 5 production reached a total of 352, but the last 16 were finished as Firefly Mk.6s. One improvement was the introduction of power-folding wings during production; this system being retrofitted to the first machines built.

Despite its similar arrangement, the next Firefly version was specifically designed for anti-submarine warfare and wore the designation AS.6. Externally, it differed from the Mk.5 by having all its guns deleted. In return, the AS.6 had provision for underwing AS stores like depth charges and directional sonobuoys. In addition, the Mk.6 had longer undercarriage legs.

The first production Firefly AS.6 flew on 23 March 1949. Firefly Mk.6 production amounted to 149 machines and a further batch of 56 Mk.5s were retrospectively converted to the Mk. 6 standard.

OPERATIONAL AS.MK.5/6

The first unit to hand over its Firefly FR.4s for FR.5s was 812 Squadron from July 1948. It had only been flying the FR.4s for six months when 812 Squadron began to receive Mk.5s on 17 July. After DLP aboard *HMS Ocean* during August, they proceeded to the Mediterranean on 3 September. 812 Squadron worked with *HMS Ocean* and *Triumph*, being shore-based at Hal Far.

At the end of the 1949 summer exercises, the 12 Fireflies returned home, disembarking at Culham on 12 September. This

allowed the crews to have leave and to collect new aircraft, with updated equipment, before returning to Malta on 28 September. At this time, *HMS Ocean* had been replaced by *HMS Glory* and 812 Squadron undertook several cruises with this carrier, visiting Italy, France, Greece, Algeria and Egypt, operating in Libya and aboard *USS Midway*. From 1951, 812 Squadron was engaged in an intensive training programme, including dive-bombing and bombardment spotting. On 8 March 1951, 812 Squadron embarked again but this time *HMS Glory* left the Mediterranean and set sail for the Far East as to take part in operations off Korea.

At the end of its second tour in Korea, 812 Squadron travelled to the UK with *HMS Glory* and *Theseus* during May 1952, stopping at Hong Kong, Singapore, Aden and Malta. The unit flew ashore to RNAS Lee-on-Solent on 4 June and the personnel took





Firefly AS.6s of 812 Squadron, a Firebrand unit and the first two jet squadrons equipped with Attackers.

Two more embarkations were spent aboard *HMS Eagle* in September and October 1952. At the end of the last cruise, on 4 December 1952, the Fireflies of 814 Squadron were ferried to Fairey for radio modifications. The aircraft came back to Lee-on-Solent during the first month of 1953 and soon embarked aboard *HMS Eagle* on 29 January. The carrier sailed for the Mediterranean where an armament programme was carried out, returning home on 25 March. 814 Squadron remained at Lee-on-Solent until the next spell which began on 16 June. At the end of the autumn cruise from September to November, 814 Squadron settled down at Lee-on-Solent on 30 November.

In preparation for the transformation onto a new aircraft, 814 Squadron moved to Eglinton on 26 January 1954 but still flew the Firefly AS.6s for some months. On 5 March 1954 the first Avenger arrived but subsequent deliveries were slow to arrive and 814 Squadron continued flying Fireflies until 20 May 1954.

Officially disbanded on 16 October 1949, 810 Squadron reformed the very next day but changes appeared in its role and material as Firefly AS.5s replaced the FR.4s. On 19 April 1950, the squadron embarked aboard *HMS Theseus* for a two-month cruise in home waters. On returning, 810 Squadron was based on RNAS Ford where it was later transitioned onto Firefly FR.5s for a participation in the Korean war. 810 Squadron re-embarked on *HMS Theseus* on 16 August 1951 for a spell which first led them to the Mediterranean for further practices before sailing to the Far East.

Returning from its Korean operations, 810 Squadron was disembarked at Arbroath on 29 May 1951. After a period of leave, the squadron returned to normal anti-submarine operations on 15 June with Firefly AS.5s. 810 Squadron and the 17th CAG were now attached to *HMS Ocean* and the first embarkation took place on 24 July. The cruise took them to the Mediterranean, with several shore-deployments at Hal Far and visits to France, Italy and North Africa. During this Mediterranean tour, 810 Squadron was transferred to *HMS Glory's*

One of 14 Firefly NF.5s bought new by the MLD, K-64 was delivered to 7 Squadron at Biak. The night fighters were scattered around 2, 4 and 5 Squadrons at Valkenburg and 7 Squadron in New Guinea.

Air Group on two occasions during the summer of 1952 before returning to *HMS Ocean* on 9 December 1952. After various exercises off Malta during the winter, *HMS Ocean* set sail in April 1953 for the Far East. 810 Squadron was involved in a second tour of operations over Korea, at the end of which it disbanded on 17 December 1953.

The FAA's needs in anti-submarine units to deal with the Soviet submarine threat led to the reformation at Eglinton of 820 Squadron with Firefly AS.5s on 3 July 1951. The work-up was marked by the loss of the CO, Lt Cdr P.S. Cole, and the Senior Observer, Lt H.E. Hunt, when their aircraft crashed into a hill on 4 October. 820 Squadron moved to St Merryn on 3 December where they received new Firefly AS.6s. Although the pilots were disappointed by the absence of guns, the observers greatly appreciated the new ASW equipment.

1952 saw their embarkation aboard *HMS Indomitable* for a cruise to Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. 820 Squadron was back at St Merryn on 30 March, only to re-embark on 16 May to take part in exercises in home waters. After a stay ashore in July and August, 820 Squadron was then transferred to *HMS Theseus* and joined the carrier on 20 August. They operated in the Mediterranean where, on 18 November during a night DLP programme, 820 Squadron registered the loss of two Fireflies as they crashed into the barrier; one aircraft ended up in the sea causing the death of Lt Clutterbuck. Although *HMS Theseus* sailed for home on 1 December, 820

In formation with an FAA Firefly T.1, Firefly 12-H was one of two aircraft converted into trainers by Fairey for the MLD. Five other Firefly Mk.1s were converted locally into T.1s and T.2s by Aviolanda between 1948 and 1952.





Squadron was left at Hal Far as it had been planned for the Fireflies to return by air. All aircraft reached St Merryn on 3 December, having stopped at Istres and Lee-on-Solent.

In January 1953, 820 Squadron collected three Fireflies (one new from Abbotsinch and two second-hand from 1840 RNVR Squadron) and at full strength landed aboard *HMS Indomitable* on 20 January. They sailed for the Mediterranean where they were involved in exercises with *HMS Theseus* and *Eagle* and with *USS Midway*. They only returned home on 7 May, settling down at Lee-on-Solent until their next embarkation on 17 June. This time 820 Squadron joined *HMS Theseus* for a journey around the Mediterranean.

Based at Lee-on-Solent from 29 October 1953, 820 Squadron remained ashore as it was intended for conversion onto Avengers. The last operational activity of the Fireflies took place in January 1954 when all eight aircraft were sent to Eglinton for an ASW course. The first Avenger arrived on 12 February and from 4 March Fireflies were used to ferry pilots to Abbotsinch in order to take delivery of further Avengers. The Firefly trainer allocated to 820 Squadron was lost on 8 March when it dived into Lough Foyle during a night flying test. The Firefly AS.6s were flown to Sydenham for storage, the remaining example's last flight was on 18 March 1954.

When the Canadians renumbered their squadrons in May 1951, the British FAA was able to use again the number 826 and officially reformed 826 Squadron with Firefly AS.6s at Ford on 15 May 1951. Being part of the 13th CAG, 826 Squadron was intended to embark aboard *HMS Eagle* but in the end it joined *HMS Illustrious* on 1 October 1951 for a short Mediterranean cruise.

Back at Ford on 24 October, 826 Squadron's next two embarkations took place aboard *HMS Indomitable* from 17 January to 17 April, with a long deployment in Gibraltar, and from 16 May to 10 July

A Firefly FR.1 of 825 Squadron in the process of being catapulted off *HMCS Warrior* in November 1946. The ship was engaged in her first operational cruise sailing round the North American continent via the Panama Canal. The old British catapult in the tail-up mode was still in use.

1952. Then 826 Squadron transferred to the Air Group of *HMS Theseus*, embarking on 20 August for a Mediterranean cruise. The Fireflies were disembarked at Hal Far on 28 November before returning home, four days later, by flying to Lee-on-Solent, with a refuelling stop in France.

The following year, 826 Squadron transferred to *HMS Indomitable*, with an initial period beginning on 20 January 1953. The carrier operated in the Mediterranean and the Fireflies were deployed ashore at Hal Far

Having just returned from a rocket firing exercise, this RCN Firefly FR.1 of 825 Squadron is being directed to the forward deck on *HMCS Warrior* in May 1947. The ex-British light fleet carrier was cruising in the Bermuda area to carry out night flying operations.

and North Front. On 7 May, 826 Squadron was back at Lee-on-Solent. The autumn cruise was spent aboard *HMS Illustrious* from 31 August to 2 October and the last operational embarkation of 1953 was aboard *HMS Glory*, with the winter spent in the Mediterranean at Hal Far. Returning to Lee-on-Solent on 28 February 1954, 826 Squadron stayed ashore until being re-equipped with Gannet AS.1s in January 1955.

Another squadron number released from RCN use, 825 Squadron reformed at Eglinton on 15 June 1951 with a complement of nine Firefly AS.5s plus one trainer. On 14 November, with the Korean War on the horizon, the crews learned that they were to change from ASW to strike and Firefly FR.5s superseded the AS variants. The squadron rejoined *HMS Theseus* on 17 January 1952 for passage to the Mediterranean. One month later, 825 Squadron transferred to *HMS Ocean* and carried out an intensive armament programme in the Malta area before sailing for Korean waters in April. En route, *HMS Ocean* stopped at Singapore and 825 Squadron carried out a strike against com-

Ground crew running up the Griffon XII of an 826 Squadron, RCN, Firefly FR.1.





Left: The Royal Canadian Navy had four Firefly T.1s for training purposes. This example was part of No.1 Training Air Group at Shearwater, the naval section of RCAF Dartmouth. Lower left: Despite 826 Squadron becoming the first operator of the Firefly Mk.4 in August 1947, these aircraft were exchanged for AS.5s within a year as the RCN specialised in ASW. Firefly VH138 was probably one of the Mk.4s converted to AS.5 standard although it retained its cannon



munist bandits in Malaya, on 25 April.

After its tour of operations in Korea, 825 Squadron disbanded but soon reformed on 2 March 1953, this time with Firefly AS.5s. During 1953, 825 Squadron had two spells aboard *HMS Eagle*, unfortunately the second was marked by the loss of the CO, Lt Cdr Keogh, whose aircraft crashed into the

sea on 24 September.

At the beginning of 1954, six aircraft were handed over to 703A Flight while new machines were received. 703A Flight formed on 17 February 1954 at Ford for the specific task of testing the new carrier controlled approach system developed by Ferranti. Based at Arbroath for the trials, the

Fireflies were flown until the unit disbanded on 4 July 1954. They carried out continuous dummy landing approaches on the island of Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth.

825 Squadron was then attached to *HMS Warrior* and landed on on 17 February 1954. The carrier sailed for the Far East, first stopping in the Mediterranean for practice. The aircraft were sent to Sembawang on 15 May and from this base they carried out 16 strikes against terrorists in Central Johore on 27 May before returning aboard *HMS Warrior* for passage to Hong Kong in June. They then operated off the Korean coast until August, but an aircraft again crashed into the sea and the pilot, Lt Nash, lost his life on 22 July. *HMS Warrior* visited Hong Kong and Singapore before commencing her passage to the UK on 16 October, via South Africa. On arrival at Lee-on-Solent on 13 December, 825 Squadron disbanded.

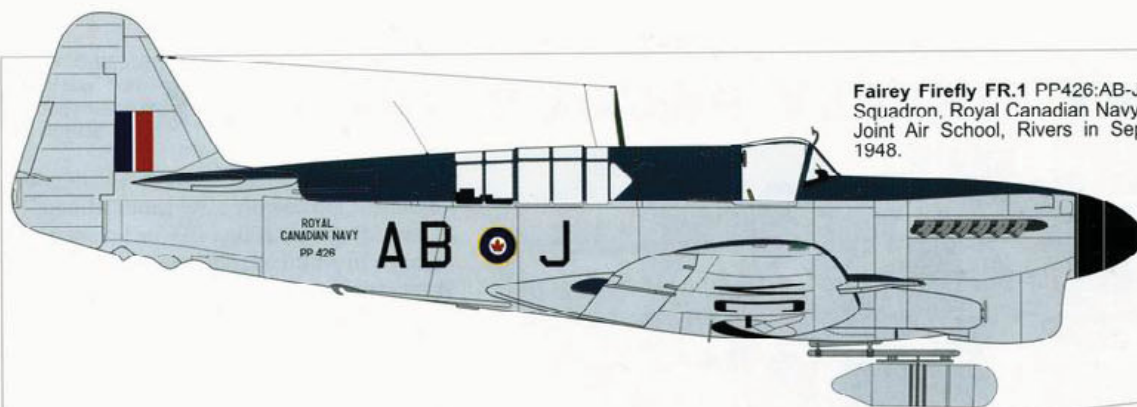
The next unit to receive Firefly Mk.6s was 821 Squadron. It reformed on 18 September 1951 with 9 Firefly AS.6s at RNAS Arbroath. Next month, they moved to Eglinton where the work-up and the weapons training were carried out until 821 Squadron settled down at Machrihanish on 15 January 1952. The ADDL programme was then undertaken. During March, the Fireflies were fitted with new pneumatic and hydraulic hook dampers in order to prevent hook-bouncing on deck-landing. With the aircraft modified, the pilots practised deck-landing on *HMS Illustrious* on 17 March.

At about this time, 821 Squadron was informed that its role was to change from ASW to strike. From May, Firefly FR.5s were delivered but, because of their time in storage, they were a continuous source of problems; ranging from faulty wiring and oil



Left: The Australians converted two Firefly AS.5s and six AS.6s for target towing duties. All the target tugs were painted yellow with black striped undersurfaces. Below: Borrowed Firefly FR.4s of 816 Squadron, RAN, during their working up period at Eglinton. Note the difference in roundels and fin flashes as well as the camouflage patterns.



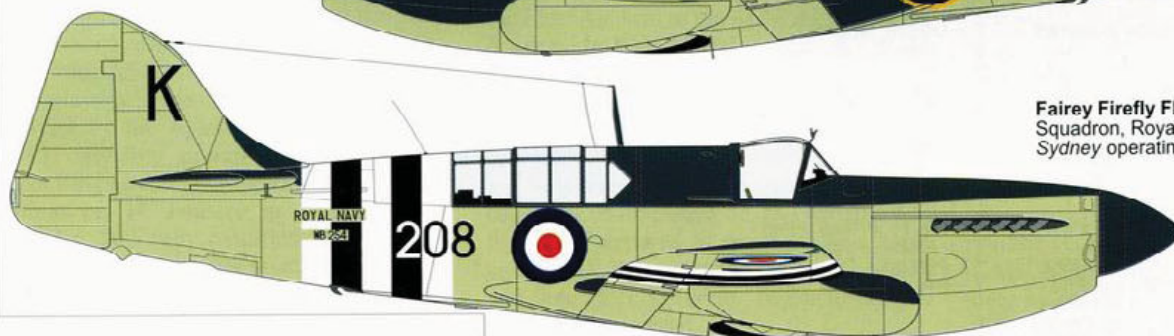
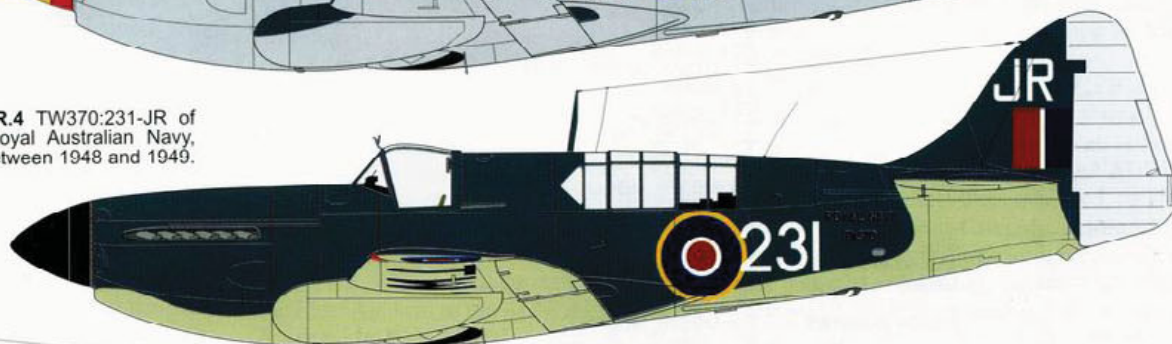


Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP426:AB-J of 826 Squadron, Royal Canadian Navy, at the Joint Air School, Rivers in September 1948.

Fairey Firefly AS.5 VH135:BD-K of 880 Squadron, Royal Canadian Navy in 1951.



Fairey Firefly FR.4 TW370:231-JR of 816 Squadron Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Sydney, between 1948 and 1949.



Fairey Firefly FR.5 WB254:208-K of 817 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy, HMAS Sydney operating off Korea in 1951.

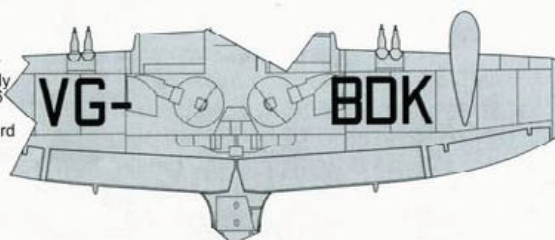
coolant or hydraulic leaks. As 821 Squadron became a strike unit, the CO who was an observer was replaced by a pilot.

On 20 June, the 10 aircraft of 821 Squadron took off to join Malta, via Ford and Istres. The work-up was completed during the summer, mainly focusing on dive-bombing, bombardment, rocket firing, spotting and Army co-operation. During September, 821 Squadron practised with *HMS Glory* in preparation for its future operations over Korea. Departure for the Far East finally took place on 9 October when all 10 Fireflies embarked with the Sea Furies of 801 Squadron.

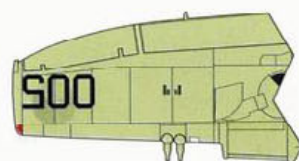
First the carrier headed for Malaya where 821 Squadron was involved in anti-bandit operations. The aircrews were briefed at RAF Butterworth and, on 27 October, they conducted 18 sorties. The Fireflies bombed and strafed selected strips of forest in which bandits were hiding. After a short stay in Singapore, *HMS Glory* then took passage to Hong Kong. During this journey, on 31 October, Lt Bacon was forced to ditch his Firefly following a serious coolant leak and the engine cut, both aircrew members escaping. *HMS Glory* still exercised with *HMS Ocean* and took on board three Fireflies from 825 Squadron - bringing the aircraft establishment up to 12 - plus five Sea Furies and two Dragonflies before entering Hong



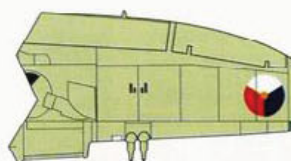
Upper and lower surfaces of Firefly VH135, RCN. 16 inch roundel to port and starboard



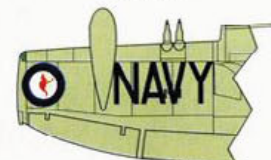
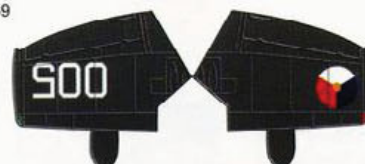
Upper and lower surfaces of Firefly T.1 in RN service



Upper and lower surfaces of MLD Firefly FR.4 post-1959



Upper and lower surfaces of RAN Firefly. 36 inch roundels



FAIREY FIREFLY PRODUCTION LIST

Mark	Quantity	Serials	Conversions and remarks
Prototypes	4	Z1826 to Z1829	
Mk.1	16	Z1830 to Z1845	NF.II: Z1831, Z1833, Z1836, Z1840, Z1841, Z1845 TT.1: Z1842
	50	Z1865 to Z1914	NF.II: Z1865, Z1868 to Z1870, Z1874 to Z1877, Z1894 to Z1898 T.1: Z1866, Z1893, Z1909 TT.1: Z1908
	45	Z1942 to Z1986	NF.II: Z1971 to Z1976 T.1: Z1943, Z1953, Z1969, Z1980
	48	Z2011 to Z2058	NF.II: Z2045 to Z2058 T.1: Z2015, Z2021, Z2025, Z2027, Z2054 TT.1: Z2020, Z2033
	25	Z2096 to Z2120	T.1: Z2108, Z2111, Z2119
	49	DK414 to DK462	General Aircraft Ltd built T.1: DK429, DK445, DK447, DK449, DK453 T.2: DK462
	38	DK476 to DK513	TT.1: DK430, DK447 General Aircraft Ltd built T.2: DK478, DK486, DK489, DK495, DK499, DK513 TT.1: DK459
	45	DK525 to DK569	General Aircraft Ltd. built T.2: DK527, DK530, DK531, DK540, DK543, DK550, DK567 T.3: DK566 TT.1: DK568
	19	DT931 to DT949	TT.1: DT939
	18	DT974 to DT991	T.1: DT933, DT974, DT975 T.3: DT976 TT.1: DT986, DT989
	18	DV117 to DV134	T.1: DV132, DV133 TT.1: DV121
	4	DV147 to DV150	
	42	MB378 to MB419	T.1: MB379, MB412 T.2: MB382 TT.1: MB387
	17	MB433 to MB449	T.1: MB433, MB437, MB441, MB443
	20	MB460 to MB479	T.1: MB465, MB473
	45	MB492 to MB536	T.1: MB496 TT.1: MB503
	45	MB549 to MB593	T.2: MB578, MB585 TT.1: MB579
	37	MB613 to MB649	TT.1: MB624
	42	MB662 to MB703	T.2: MB662, MB673, MB693, MB694 TT.1: MB702
	42	MB717 to MB758	T.1: MB750 T.2: MB717, MB725, MB727, MB731, MB745, MB747, MB752, MB756, MB758 TT.1: MB728
	47	PP391 to PP437	T.3: PP411, PP425, PP433, PP435 TT.1: PP392, PP413
	42	PP456 to PP497	T.3: PP478, PP485, PP491 TT.1: PP457, PP460, PP469
	45	PP523 to PP567	T.3: PP523
	44	PP580 to PP623	T.3: PP609, PP610, PP657
	22	PP639 to PP660	
	3	TW677 to TW679	
Mk.4	2	TW687 to TW688	
	11	TW689 to TW699	
	40	TW715 to TW754	
	43	VG957 to VG999	TT.4: TW722, TW723, TW733, TW734, TW737, TW739, TW744, TW750, TW751, TW753 TT.4: VG957, VG958, VG959, VG961, VG962, VG965, VG966, VG967, VG968, VG974, VG977, VG979, VG981, VG982, VG988, VG993
	24	VH121 to VH144	Several converted to AS.5. Serials have not been identified TT.4: VH126, VH127, VH132, VH143 Fairey c/ns 8227 to 8266 built for the Dutch MLD as FR.4s
Mk.5	40	-	
	20	VT362 to VT381	
	50	VT392 to VT441	
	47	VT458 to VT504	T.5: VT440, VT502
	26	VX371 to VX396	T.5: VX373, VX385 TT.5: VX388
	26	VX413 to VX438	
	30	WB243 to WB272	TT.5: WB271
	36	WB281 to WB316	
	53	WB330 to WB382	
	34	WB391 to WB424	TT.5: WB406
Mk.6	14	-	Fairey c/ns 8389 to 8402 built for the Dutch MLD as NF.5s
	16	WB425 to WB440	
	6	WB505 to WB510	TT.6: WB518
	8	WB516 to WB523	
	49	WD824 to WD872	TT.6: WD826, WD828, WD840
	46	WD878 to WD923	TT.6: WD901
	6	WH627 to WH632	
Mk.7	18	WJ104 to WJ121	TT.6: WJ109
	29	WJ146 to WJ174	
	23	WJ187 to WJ209	
	2	WJ215 to WJ216	
	26	WK348 to WK373	
	19	WM761 to WM779	
	35	WM796 to WM809, WM811 to WM822, WM824 to WM832	
	17	WM855, WM864 to WM879	
Mk.8	2	WM810, WM823	
	28	WM856 to WM863, WM880 to WM899	
	4	WP351 to WP354	

Firefly U.8 and U.9 conversions

U.8	6	WJ147, WJ149 to WJ153 (plus 34 Mk.7s directly built as U.8s)
U.9	40	VH130, VH134, VT364, VT370, VT372, VT403, VT413, VT430, VT441, VT461, VT463, VT470, VT481, VT485, VT487, VT493, VT494, VT497, VX416, VX418, VX421, VX427, VX429, WB245, WB257, WB307, WB331, WB341, WB347, WB350, WB365, WB373, WB374, WB382, WB391, WB392, WB394, WB402, WB409, WB410.

Royal Australian Navy Firefly AS.6s arrived in Australia on board *HMAS Sydney*, were unloaded and then towed by trucks to the nearest airfield.

Kong on 4 November. A significant number of modifications were carried out, including the removal of HF and ASH equipment in order to reduce weight, the fitting of a gun in the front cockpit for use in case of landing on enemy territory, and the highly visible white spinners were painted black. *HMS Glory* was then ready to sail for Japan and joined the Americans for operations over Korea. At the end of this war tour, 825 Squadron disbanded in Hong Kong on 25 May 1953.

The last front-line unit to equip with Firefly Mk.6s, 824 Squadron reformed on 18 February 1952 at Eglinton. The initial establishment was of eight Firefly AS.6s, one FR.6 and one T.2. Before embarkation, two further Firefly FR.6s were loaned from RNAS Anthon. 824 Squadron joined the carrier on 4 June for a spell which lasted until 24 June and included a participation in Operation 'Castanets' in company with *HMS Implacable* and *Indefatigable*. The squadron remained at Eglinton during the summer and then flew again twice aboard *HMS Illustrious* in September and in October.

From 24 November, flying was restricted as four Firefly AS.6s were sent to Ringway for modification of the W/T sets. The remaining AS.6s and the sole FR.6 also flew to Faireys in December, stopping all flying activity by the squadron. By mid-January 1953, only four aircraft had been returned from Ringway and they were sent to Lee-on-Solent on 16 January in order to start ADDLs. Two fully modified Firefly AS.6s were taken from a Royal Australian Navy batch and all six aircraft available landed on *HMS Theseus* on 21 January. Two days later, a further two Fireflies joined the carrier just in time for the spring cruise of the Home Fleet to the Mediterranean. Various exercises were carried out in company with *HMS Implacable* and *Indefatigable*. One Firefly was lost on 30 January as the engine failed and Lt Pepper ditched alongside a ship which rescued the crew. *HMS Theseus* sailed for home on 12 March and 824 Squadron was back at Lee-on-Solent three days later.

824 Squadron was still involved in a short spell aboard *HMS Illustrious* in June 1953 but then the unit began to get rid of its Fireflies. As Avengers arrived, six aircraft had been delivered to 737 Squadron at



Eglinton while another had gone to the RNRV at Abbotsinch by mid-July.

CANADIAN FIREFLIES

On 19 December 1945, the Canadian Government approved the formation of an air arm for the Royal Canadian Navy. A carrier, *HMCS Warrior*, was obtained from the UK and was commissioned on 24 January 1946. The same day, two Canadian-manned squadrons were officially transferred from the Fleet Air Arm to the RCN. Alongside the Seafire Mk.XVs of 803 Squadron, the 12 Firefly FR.Is of 825 Squadron became Canadian. This unit was based at RNAS Burscough and was in its work-up period following re-equipment with Fireflies during November 1945. After having been relocated at Lee-on-Solent on 28 February, 825 Squadron prepared to move to their home country. DLT was carried out on 17 March and then *HMCS Warrior* began to embark stores and personnel.

Both squadrons embarked aboard *HMCS Warrior* on 23 March 1946 for Canada. The aircraft were stationed at the RCN Air Section which had been established at RCAF Dartmouth, later commissioning as *HMCS Shearwater* in December 1948. Training was completed and included carrier qualification during July in preparation for the first operational cruise. This took place on 5 November 1946. The 17 Fireflies of 825 Squadron joined *HMCS Warrior* for a cruise around the North American continent, via the Panama canal. Having sailed up at west coast, 825 Squadron was put ashore on RCAF Patricia Bay on 15 December. The

Fireflies stayed on the Pacific coast until returning aboard *HMCS Warrior* on 13 February 1947, the carrier reaching Halifax on 27 March.

825 Squadron again joined *HMCS Warrior* in April in order to practise night flying. Six Fireflies were first sent ashore to an airfield in Bermuda where they carried out ADDLs at night. The aircraft were modified, receiving anti-glare exhaust shields, before commencing night operations from the carrier at the end of April. During the night landings, several accidents occurred but all were minor and, at the end of the cruise, 11 Fireflies flew directly to Dartmouth before the carrier entered Halifax on 14 May.

On 15 May 1947, the Carrier Air Group System was adopted; 803 and 825 Squadrons formed the 19th CAG while the two newly reformed 883 and 826 Squadrons (on the very same day) constituted the 18th CAG. At that time, the 19th CAG handed over its Seafires F.XVs and Firefly FR.Is to the 18th CAG. Thus 826 Squadron had to soldier on with the old Firefly FR.Is. On 17 July, the first accident was recorded when a Firefly crashed into the sea, killing Lts Lamon and Gailbraith.

In August, personnel of the 19th CAG embarked in *HMCS Warrior* which sailed for the UK to re-equip with Hawker Sea Furies and Firefly FR.4s; 826 Squadron becoming the first unit in the world to fly the Mk. 4 (a British gift aimed at preventing any purchase of aircraft from the USA). After completing trials and work-up at RNAS Eglinton, the 19th CAG embarked on 22 May 1948 aboard *HMCS Magnificent*, which had just replaced *HMCS Warrior* in April, for transfer to Canada, where they arrived on 1 June.

In the meantime, aircraft of the 18th CAG had been engaged in a live firing strike on a captured German submarine. The exercise was curtailed as the Fireflies achieved the sinking of U-190 during their first rocket attack, on 21 October. In November 1947, they carried out sea training aboard *HMCS Warrior*. These were the last flying operations from this carrier. The Group spent two months on combined operations and training with the RCAF and the Army, when 883 and



Royal Australian Navy target tug Firefly TT.4 with yellow trainer bands and undersides in black and yellow stripes. These aircraft were normally based at Nowra.



826 Squadrons flew from Dartmouth to the Joint Air School at Rivers in mid-August 1948.

Also in August 1948, the 19th CAG undertook the first DLT aboard *HMCS Magnificent*. Both 826 and 803 Squadrons returned to the carrier in September, but water contamination of the fuel tanks put an end to the flying operations after two aircraft had ditched and several others had suffered from engine troubles.

In November 1948, the CAG's organisation was changed as Canada had decided to specialise the RCN in the anti-submarine

role. The 18th CAG became a wholly anti-submarine group, composed of 825 Squadron with Firefly FR.4s and 826 Squadron flying FR.1s; while the 19th CAG was the fighter counterpart. This change of role necessitated re-equipment with adequate aircraft. Pending the arrival of Avengers, Canada exchanged the Firefly FR.4s for anti-submarine models. So, in February 1949, 825 Squadron took passage for the UK to replace its Firefly FR.4s with 11 AS.5s. The crews were also offered ASM courses at Londonderry. *HMCS Magnificent* returned to Canada with the new Firefly

In 1954, four Australian Fireflies were locally converted to T.5 pilot trainers with kits supplied by Fairey. This formation included VX373, VT502 and VX385 of 724 Squadron based at Nowra.

AS.5s aboard on 25 February 1949.

On 5 March, the carrier sailed again, this time with the fighter CAG and six Firefly FR.1s of 826 Squadron aboard. They practised around Jamaica. 826 Squadron lost an aircraft which was ditched. *HMCS Magnificent* then visited the US base in Cuba and operated in Bermuda before coming back to Canada; the aircraft being flown directly ashore while the carrier was still 225 miles away from port.

The next embarkation, in May 1949, saw both ASW squadrons aboard *HMCS Magnificent* for the first cruise for the Firefly AS.5s. Unfortunately, the carrier ran aground at Port Mouton on 4 June; ending the cruise as a hull inspection was necessary. The Fireflies were lightered ashore to Shearwater. With the carrier out of service for several months, a new programme was planned for the 18th CAG. The Fireflies were deployed to the US Navy's airfield at NAS Quonset Point on 7 July. The crews were trained with American techniques. Nevertheless, the Fireflies appeared unsuitable for the US deck landing technique which required a high rate of sink and they suffered from undercarriage failure and stress damage. This training ended on 24 September.

HMCS Magnificent was cleared by October and DLT resumed from 17 November. After a stay ashore, both ASW squadrons returned to the carrier on 13 January 1950 for a cruise to Bermuda which lasted until 2 February. As soon as 13 February, 825 and 826 Squadrons were back aboard and sailed for the Caribbean. Unfortunately, on 18 February, 826 Squadron recorded a fatal accident when the Firefly of Lt Peever crashed on take-off, with only the observer rescued. The cruise included a visit to Cuba and an exercise with the US Navy before *HMCS Magnificent* returned to Halifax on 14 April.

While 826 Squadron prepared to receive Avengers, 825 Squadron embarked on



Above: The three surviving Firefly TT.1s out of the six obtained by the Danish Flyvevabnet were photographed in 1958 before their withdrawal. All target towing Fireflies were used by Esk 722 at Vaerlose. Below: Firefly TT.1 Z2033 before its delivery flight to Sweden where it was operated by the civil operator Svensk Flygtjänst AB for the Swedish forces.



One of the few surviving early Fireflies is this F.1 in the Royal Thai Air Force Museum at Bangkok. Part of a British government gift 10 Mk.1s and two T.2s were donated in 1951 to enter service with No.1 Squadron at Don Muang. They were replaced by American aircraft in 1954. (A.W.Hall)

HMCS Magnificent on 22 August, in company with the two Sea Furies units. They visited several NATO countries and exercised with *HMAS Sydney* in the North Sea. They then set sail for Bermuda in November before returning home, 825 Squadron flying ashore on 25 November. In the meantime, 826 Squadron had deleted all its old Firefly FR.1s during September and completed its conversion on the Avenger TBM-3Es.

The CAG system was again re-organised on 15 January 1951. 826 Squadron, now linked to 803 Squadron flying Sea Furies, was part of the 19th Support Air Group and became a shore-based pool unit. Other changes were introduced on 1 May. 825 Squadron was redesignated 880 Squadron and formed part of the 31st Support Air Group with 870 Squadron (ex-803 Squadron). Although not intended for embarkation, the 31st SAG had the opportunity to join *HMCS Magnificent* for DLT in May. A few months later, in November 1951, the Firefly AS.5s disappeared from the RCN as additional Avengers had been purchased and were delivered to 825 Squadron.

AUSSIE FIREFLIES

The second Commonwealth nation to buy Fireflies was Australia. In 1947, this country decided to form a Fleet Air Arm and obtained two carriers from Great Britain. The first carrier (ex-*HMS Terrible*) was commissioned on 5 February 1949 as *HMAS Sydney*. The second ship (ex-*HMS Majestic*) was heavily modified to incorporate an angle deck, a steam catapult, a mirror landing system and larger deck lifts. She only appeared as *HMAS Melbourne* on 28 October 1955. In the meantime, Australia had ordered Fireflies and Sea Furies in order to form three carrier air groups and had commissioned a shore base at Nowra.

The RNAS Eglinton saw the birth of Australian naval aviation when the 20th CAG was commissioned there on 28 August 1948. Part of the 20th CAG, 805 and 816 Squadrons had trained in the UK on Sea Furies and Firefly FR.4s, respectively,



loaned by the Royal Navy. The aircraft were officially handed over to Australia on 27 October 1948. After completing their work-up, both units embarked aboard *HMAS Sydney* on 12 April 1949 with a first batch of Australian aircraft: two Firefly FR.4s (instructional airframes), 24 Firefly FR.5s and 27 Sea Furies. In 1949 and 1950, Fairey Aviation at Bankstown modified 20 Firefly FR.5s to AS.5 standard with the installation of ASW equipment and the removal of the guns.

816 Squadron arrived in Australia on 25 May and the aircraft were towed by road to Nowra. 816 Squadron was attached to *HMAS Sydney*. The aircraft complement was modified with the introduction of Firefly AS.6s from July 1951. During the summer of 1953, 816 Squadron prepared to operate off Korea and worked up along with two Sea Fury squadrons aboard *HMAS Vengeance*. All the Firefly Mk.6s were superseded by Mk.5s at this time. The intended Korean war tour did not materialise and the Fireflies returned ashore on 9 August. Even so 816 Squadron was present off Korea when *HMAS Sydney* was involved in a peace keeping spell after the armistice, from November 1953 to June 1954. The other embarkations were all aboard *HMAS Sydney*. Four cruises, including deployments at Hong Kong and Singapore, were carried out until 816 Squadron disbanded on 27 April 1955.

The second RAN carrier air group formed at RNAS St Merryn on 25 April 1950 as the 21st CAG with 808 and 817 Squadrons. These two units also trained in the UK on aircraft lent to the RAN by their British host. The 21st CAG then embarked in October 1950 aboard *HMAS Sydney* as well as a second batch of aircraft including two Firefly AS.5s and 30 Firefly AS.6s. 817 Squadron settled down at Nowra on 6 December and operated a mixed batch of Firefly AS.5s and AS.6s. 817 Squadron worked with *HMAS Sydney* during May and the second embarkation saw their involvement in the Korean War. At the end of its war operations, 817 Squadron was again attached to *HMAS Sydney* on several cruises, except for three periods spent aboard *HMAS Vengeance* between the autumn of 1953 and the spring of 1954. Finally, 817 Squadron disbanded on the same day as its sister unit, both squadrons preparing to reform with Gannets.

Further Fireflies were delivered in 1952 and 1953; reaching Australia aboard *HMAS Sydney*, *HMAS Vengeance* - which was on loan for three years from November 1952 - or merchant vessels. Overall, the RAN took delivery of two Firefly FR.4s, 37 AS.5s and 69 AS.6s. These deliveries allowed the formation, on 3 August 1954, of a third Firefly unit; 851 Squadron which was dedicated to operational training, also at Nowra. 851 Squadron received an initial complement of 16 Firefly AS.6s and T.5s but they remained ashore, except for a short DLT programme aboard *HMAS Sydney* in March 1956. 851 Squadron continued flying the Fireflies long after the two ASW units had deleted them and re-equipped with Gannets, as it disbanded on 13 January 1958.

The RAN needs in trainer and target-towing aircraft led to the conversion of several airframes to fulfil these roles. Four Firefly AS.5s were transformed into dual trainer T.5s by adapting, with some redesign work, kits identical to those used by Fairey to produce the Firefly T.1s and T.2s. Again kits were supplied by Fairey to modify two Firefly AS.5s and six AS.6s into target tugs,

Ethiopia was perhaps the most exotic user of the Firefly. They were abandoned in the sun at Asmara in the seventies after all useful equipment and cannons were removed.





This picture of Firefly AS.5 VT406 clearly shows the arrester hook, the Youngman flaps and prominent leading edge radiator air intakes.

which received the designations TT.5s and TT.6s. These trainers and target tugs supplemented other Fireflies and aircraft in the three RAN second-line units: 723, 724 and 725 Squadrons. The former unit operated as the Fleet Requirements Unit from 1957 to 1963. 725 Squadron also was a FRU until it took on ASW training in 1959. The last Australian operator was 724 Squadron where the last Fireflies soldiered on in training tasks until March 1966. Firefly TT.5s were also delivered to 851 Squadron.

KOREAN WAR

The invasion of South Korea by Communist

troops from the north on 25 June 1950 led the United Nations to despatch forces to Korea. At the opening of the campaign, the British Far East Fleet was put at the disposal of General MacArthur. The sole aircraft carrier available in the area was *HMS Triumph*, which was normally due home after operations in Malaya, carrying 827 Squadron with Firefly FR.1s and 800 Squadron with Seafire FR.47s.

Within days, the British ships provisioned at Kure, Japan, and joined the American Carrier Task Force 77, which included the *USS Valley Forge*, at Okinawa. They then set sail for the Yellow Sea to start offensive missions at dawn on 3 July. Installations at Haeju airfield were attacked by nine Fireflies and 12 Seafires. Later in the day, whilst American aircraft mounted another

raid, the British were confined to CAP above the Fleet due to their limited range. On 4 July, the 13th CAG attacked a rail bridge and then strafed various targets on the way back, including gun positions and villages. At the end of the day, *HMS Triumph* proceeded to Okinawa, putting an end to the first of its war patrols.

HMS Triumph again took station off Korea on 18 July in order to participate in the landing at Pohang. Once again, due to their limited range, the British aircraft were restricted to CAPs for the fighters and to ASW patrols for the Fireflies. The carrier set sail for Sasebo on 21 July. The third patrol, which lasted from 24 to 30 July, was similar to the previous one, with long and uneventful ASW patrols. Only the USN aircraft carried out the much-needed strikes in support of the troops as things were going badly on the ground.

The next spell saw *HMS Triumph* in the Yellow Sea on 12 August, its mission being to blockade the west coast in order to prevent any supplies arriving by sea to the North Korean troops engaged in the south. The aircraft of the 13th CAG carried out armed reconnaissances along the coast. On 14 August, six Fireflies and six Seafires attacked three ships in the Chinnampo estuary. Next day, they returned to Japan but soon were back off Korea, on 19 August. 827 Squadron rocketed and sank a gunboat. Other small ships were destroyed during the

One of the last Firefly AS.5s of 737 Squadron was flown to RNAS Anthorn for storage whilst the Naval Anti-Submarine School re-equipped with the Gannet in 1955.





ensuing strikes of this patrol.

After a three-day period of replenishment at Sasebo, *HMS Triumph* resumed operations on 27 August. While the Seafires carried out CAPs, the Fireflies were engaged in armed reconnaissances, visiting the main ports on the west coast. Although activity was reduced, 827 Squadron managed to sink several motor junks and other small boats as well as pontoons. This patrol came to an end on 30 August and the next one began on 4 September. On the first day, the Fireflies flew armed reconnaissances and sank two motor junks. During the next day, they spotted for the guns of ships off Inchon. Then *HMS Triumph* sailed around Korea and operated off Wonsan, on the east coast, on 8 August. The aircraft concentrated on communications targets, with efficient rocket attacks on numerous railway boxcars by the Fireflies. On 9 August, Seafires and Fireflies attacked an airfield before the carrier withdrew to Sasebo.

HMS Triumph left harbour on 12 September. On the way to Korea, 827 Squadron provided air cover for the convoys bringing the US Marines intended for the great landing at Inchon on 15 September. The first step was the capture of Wolmi-Do island during which two Fireflies spotted for the Fleet's guns. The capture of the island was rapidly achieved in the morning and then 827 Squadron carried out armed reconnaissances and attacked targets in the Chinnampo area. The ensuing landings at Inchon were also successful, allowing a rapid advance of the US troops and the recapture of Seoul three days later. The 13th CAG continued its armed reconnaissances during the five following days in order to clear the way for the ground forces. In addition, the Fireflies performed bombardment spotting. By this time the 13th CAG was really exhausted, their aircraft getting near to the end of their operational lives. *HMS Triumph* returned to Sasebo, arriving on 21 September, before sailing to Hong Kong and the UK. On arrival at Ford, on 15 November 1950, 827 Squadron prepared to shut down and disbanded seven days later.

HMS Theseus, with the 17th CAG comprising Sea Furies of 807 Squadron and the

A formation of Firefly AS.5s from *HMS Glory* including WB264, VT486 and VT420.

Firefly FR.5s of 810 Squadron, relieved *HMS Triumph* and was engaged along the western coast of Korea from 9 October 1950, with the main task of blockading the Yellow Sea. The first mission consisted of an uneventful photo reconnaissance but when landing on, the strength of 810 Squadron was reduced by three Fireflies because of accidents. The aircraft of Cdr Plt Bailey missed the wires and flew through the barriers, hitting two other machines on the deckpark. The first Firefly was subsequently dropped overboard while the other two were reduced to spares. In addition to daily ASM and anti-mine patrols, 810 Squadron carried out bombings on gun emplacements, harbour installations and bridges in the ensuing days. After the attacks, the Fireflies usually searched for shipping round the coast and strafed opportunity targets.

The weather deteriorated from 15 October and, the next day, *HMS Theseus* moved into Inchon and remained in harbour until 18 October. Due to the rapid advance of the UN troops which reached the North Korean capital of Pyongyang on 19 October, few targets were available for the Fireflies until 20 October when *HMS Theseus* operated in the north. Only two armed strikes took place in the Chongju area before the carrier proceeded to Sasebo on 21 October.

HMS Theseus returned to operations in the Yellow Sea on 29 October. The missions

Firefly FR.5 VT374 of 812 Squadron was disembarked from *HMS Ocean* and deployed at Hal Far. It carried the squadron badge of a flying fish

were to cover minesweeping operations in the Chinnampo estuary. While six Fireflies were flown ashore to Iwakuni, American helicopters joined the British carrier to carry out minespotting. The activity of 810 Squadron was thus reduced to a few patrols, even when the helicopters were transferred to *USS Carmick* on 31 October. *HMS Theseus* finally set sail for Sasebo on 6 November and the six Fireflies left at Iwakuni flew on board on the following day.

The carrier had a longer rest as the end of the fighting seemed imminent and she visited Hong Kong. The catapult was repaired and aircraft maintenance was carried out aboard the ship and at Kai Tak. The 17th CAG also exercised in the Hong Kong area with the RAF and the Army. *HMS Theseus* left for Sasebo on 1 December as all forces were again urgently needed. Chinese troops had attacked on 26 November and changed the balance in Korea at a time when UN forces had completely defeated their North Korean opponents and approached the Yalu river; the natural border with China. The aerial situation was also significantly modified with the appearance of Soviet-flown MiG-15s. Fortunately the Fireflies avoided encounters with these fast and heavily armed jets until the summer of 1952.

Operations over Korea resumed on 5 December, in very poor weather with snow storms. Although the bad conditions persisted 810 Squadron carried out the usual ASM patrols, strikes over the north and armed reces along the coast. Lines of communication, and especially bridges, were the main targets as well as shipping and harbour installations. The ship returned to Sasebo on 14 December for re-ammunitioning.

The 17th CAG continued operations from 18 December in poor weather. The Firefly's missions consisted mainly in ASM patrols and armed reconnaissances which often proved unsuccessful as targets were scarce. After a stay at Sasebo on 27 and 28 December 1950, *HMS Theseus* sailed for the Inland Sea and anchored off Kure, finally entering the harbour on 29 December. There maintenance was carried out and spares, including a new Firefly for 810 Squadron, were transferred from *HMS Unicorn*.



Firefly AS.6 WB313 of 826 Squadron catching the wire on *HMS Glory* in 1953. This aircraft was amongst 56 Mk.5 airframes that were converted to AS.6 standard.

After a further move to Sasebo, *HMS Theseus* was back on operations on 7 January 1951. They provided support for the ground troops that faced a North Korean and Chinese advance and carried out armed reconnaissances over the supply routes from Manchuria to the front, but again the weather was very poor and precluded flying on some occasions. From 14 January, 810 Squadron attacked villages holding Chinese troops in the Suwon and Osan areas. The Fireflies also strafed communication lines as well as troop movements and struck at airfields. At this moment, the use of RATOG was necessary due to a problem with the ship's catapult. Unfortunately the jettisoning of the expended RATOG caused damage to the fuselage. The British aircraft put the Chinese ground forces in difficulty until they withdrew to Sasebo on 16 January.

On 25 January 1951, *HMS Theseus* again sailed for the Korean waters. At this time the Chinese offensive had been stopped but they held Seoul and Taegu. For the first time the Fireflies were loaded with four 60 lb rockets as a supplement to the two 500 lb bombs in order to give close support to the UN troops near Suwon and Haeju. CAS missions continued throughout the month, with plenty of targets like troop entrenchments, observation posts, gun and mortar emplacements, road blocks and so on. On 4 February, the carrier was relieved by *USS Bataan* and set sail for Kure.

With two new Fireflies in exchange for 'time expired' machines, 810 Squadron resumed CAS sorties over Korea on 14



February. The operations also included several attacks on bridges, tunnels and villages when the presence of low clouds prevented CAS. This patrol ended on 24 February when *HMS Theseus* returned to Japan.

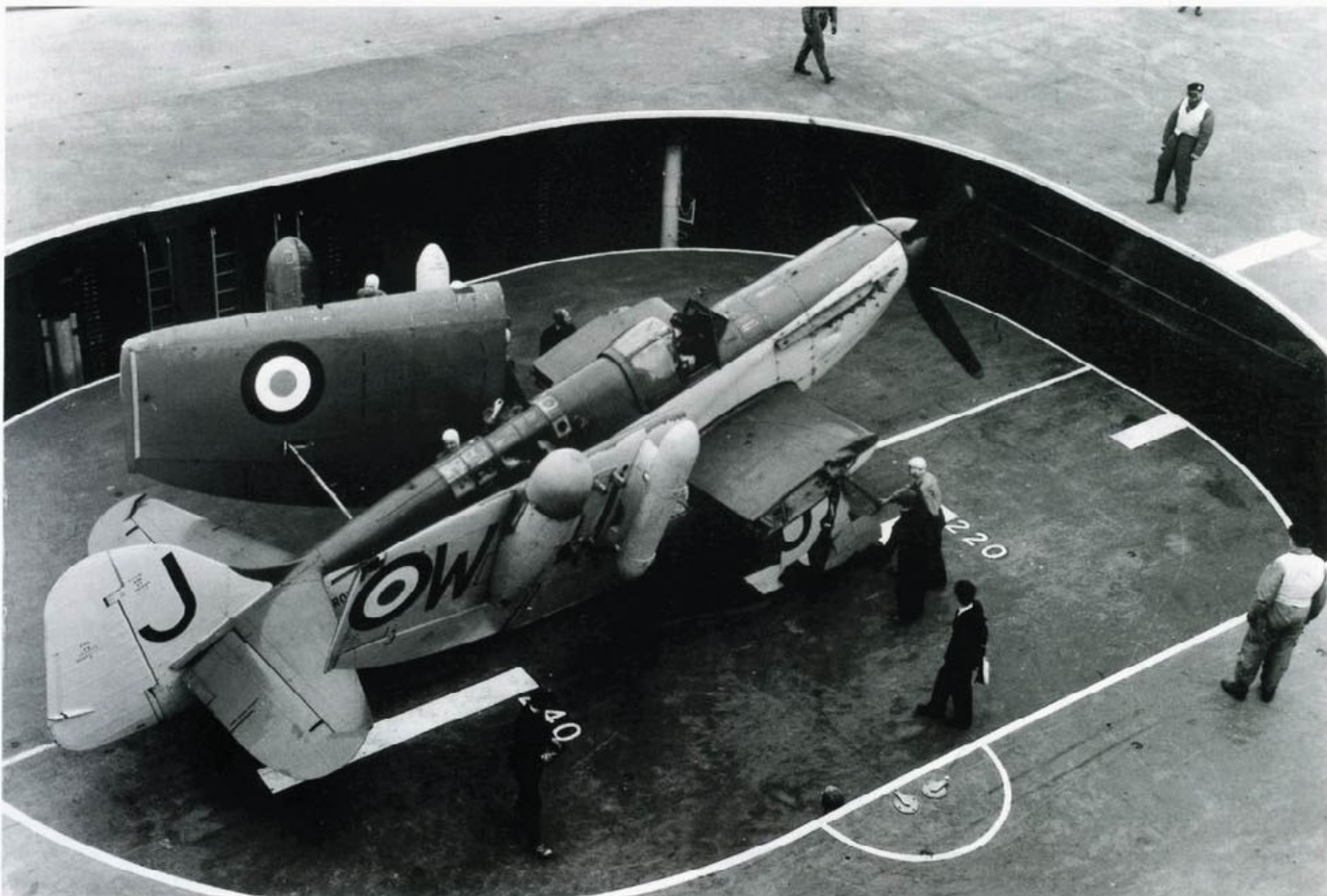
The 17th CAG was again on war duty on 5 March, at the moment the UN forces began their counter-offensive which led to the recapture of Seoul on 14 March. 810 Squadron took its toll of bridges and also attacked a railway tunnel using 1,000 lb bombs for the first time, three of them successfully exploding at the entrance. The next day saw the write-off of two Fireflies due to landing accidents. Another was slightly damaged by ground fire. Their serviceability became really low when a fourth aircraft entered the barrier on 8 March. The Fireflies still concentrated on bridges, tunnels and villages holding stores or ammunitions until 11 March when CAS resumed. They then attacked artillery positions and trenches, along with the usual bridge bombings with

1,000 lb stores. Unfortunately, one Firefly was lost on 13 March while attacking a bridge near Hungsu. The aircraft crashed, killing Lt G.H. Cooles and Flt.Lt.(RAF) D.W. Guy. This was the last operating day as the ship returned to Sasebo.

The replenishment lasted until 21 March, during this period 810 Squadron received four new aircraft and maintenance performed engine changes. The next patrol lasted until 1 April and was a replica of the previous one with numerous CAS missions. The Fireflies attacked troop positions and gun emplacements in order to ease the UN ground forces advance. Whilst at Sasebo, *HMS Theseus* got rid of its Sea Otter as a helicopter was taken on board for rescue duties.

In company with *USS Bataan*, *HMS*

A Firefly AS.6 being brought down to the hangar on *HMS Eagle* in 1953. The Firefly Mk.5-6s introduced power-folding wings and saved a lot of work for deck handling crews



771 and 703 Squadrons merged in August 1955 to form 700 Squadron, the Trials and Requirements Unit, which had nine Firefly TT.4s including VG974. In February 1957 the job was taken over by a civil operator.

Theseus resumed operations on 9 April. On the second day, while carrying out a reconnaissance in the Wonsan vicinity, Lt T.C.S. Leece was attacked by a US Marines Corsair and returned to the carrier with the starboard tank on fire. A second Firefly escaped unhurt from the US Marines' attack. After a day of rest on 11 April due to bad weather, 810 Squadron attacked bridges near Hungnam but recorded a loss. Cd Pilot F.D.C. Bailey was hit by ground fire and was forced to ditch his aircraft following an engine seizure through lack of oil; the crew was picked up by helicopters. Although the next day was Friday the 13th, the two strikes went off without incident for 810 Squadron.

After further strikes on bridges in the Wonsan area on 14 and 15 April, *HMS Theseus* left their American companions and sailed for a patrol off the west coast. They reached their operational area on 17 April and began operations with strikes on bridges near Haeju and Chaengang. Attacks were repeated on the same kind of target next day which proved to be the last operating day off Korea. Actually, the strike launched on 19 April was prohibited from flying over Korea due to the presence of low clouds and the Fireflies only carried out AS patrols. The carrier then sailed for Sasebo before departing for the UK on 25 April 1951.

HMS Glory, carrying the Sea Furies of 804 Squadron and the Firefly FR.5s of 812 Squadron which were part of the 14th CAG, relieved *HMS Theseus* on 27 April 1951. The aircraft were directly engaged in the great air offensive intended to cut off the North Korean lines of communication used to support the Chinese offensive launched at the end of April; the British were again given the western coast.

Right: Firefly WJ215 was the first development aircraft for the AS.7. It was converted from an AS.6 airframe and still had its original tail unit which proved inefficient for lateral stability after the re-introduction of the nose radiator. Below: The second Firefly AS.7 prototype was WJ216. The fin and rudder has been extended and unlike all previous Fireflies the tailwheel was non-retractable.



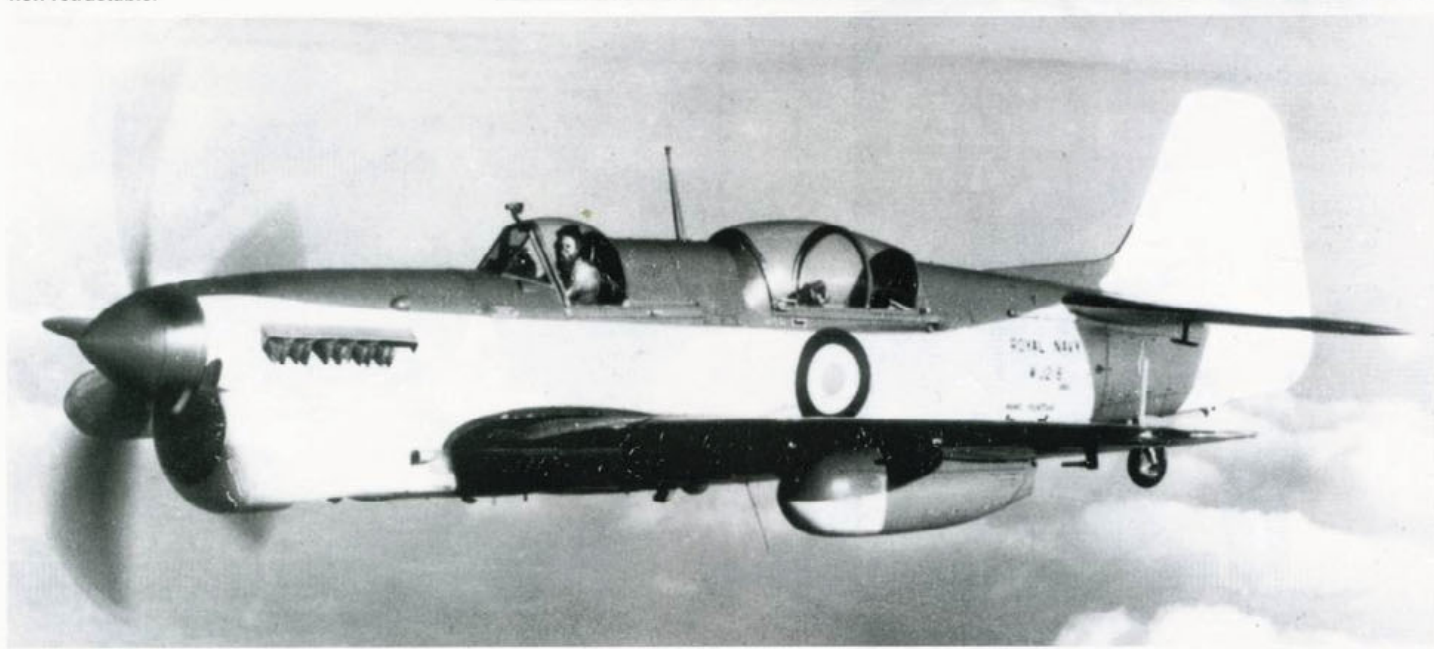
The first operational day was cancelled due to bad weather and the first sorties were carried out on 28 April. Four Fireflies took off for a close air support mission but two aircraft were forced to return following a fuel transfer problem while the two others were unable to contact the ground forces and chose to strike an airfield. Further CAS were carried out in the Haeju area until 2 May when *USS Bataan* joined the fleet and the Fireflies were tasked with armed reconnaissances, in addition to the CAS.

After re-ammunitioning at Sasebo from 7 to 10 May, *HMS Glory* again proceeded to the Yellow Sea. During this patrol, 812 Squadron mainly bombed bridges and strafed targets of opportunity and, on two occasions, spotted for the guns of *HMS Kenya* and *Ceylon*. On 18 May, the Firefly of Lt R. Williams was hit and ditched off the coast; the crew was picked up by the rescue

helicopter. *HMS Glory* was back at Sasebo on 20 May and entered dry dock.

The carrier sailed again on 3 June and 812 Squadron resumed operations the next day, with the usual bombing of bridges and strafing of villages, lorries, junks and troops. Unfortunately, 812 Squadron recorded its first casualty on 5 June. P.3 S.W.E. Ford, flying alone, was killed when an engine failure occurred as he landed on. Another aircraft was lost two days later due to enemy fire but Lt R.E. Wilson successfully ditched his aircraft near a friendly island and the crew was safely rescued by helicopter. A third Firefly was lost before the end of the patrol, again in a landing accident.

Operations ceased on 12 June as the ship proceeded to Japan. *HMS Glory* returned off the Korean coast on 22 June and bombing missions resumed the next day. During an attack on a barrack building near





Pyongyang, on 28 June, the Firefly flown by Lt J.H. Sharp and Aircrewman G.B. Wells was shot down, killing both airmen. Later in the day, another 812 Squadron's aircraft was severely damaged and was directed to Suwon for repairs. Due to the catapult breakdown, the use of RATOG was necessary on 1 July, the last day of operations.

On 10 July, *HMS Glory* left Sasebo for the Yellow Sea. On 16 July, 812 Squadron suffered the loss of Lt R. Williams and Sub-Lt L.R. Shepley during a bombing attack north of Sariwon. Operations ceased on 22 July as the ship proceeded to Japan for replenishment which lasted until 25 July. The next patrol included the usual bombing and spotting missions and lasted until the carrier was relieved by the *USS Sicily* on 4 August. *HMS Glory* returned to operations on 13 August but this patrol was curtailed three days later to take shelter from a typhoon.

The carrier was able to leave Japan on 31

August for another patrol during which a Firefly was lost. The aircraft of Lts P.G.W. Morris and G.E. Legge landed in enemy territory during a CAS mission on 9 September. The crew was recovered by a helicopter which had to land on a small island due to lack of petrol. Both crews remained there overnight and were finally rescued in the morning before the British ships proceeded to Kure.

The next patrol led *HMS Glory* off the east coast on 16 September for a two-day strike on Wonsan. After a rapid re-fuelling and the loading of RATOGs as the catapult was by then working badly, the carrier set sail for the west coast on 20 September. On the second day of operations, a defective RATOG sent the Firefly of Cdr Plt J.P. Hack and Sub-Lt R.G.A. Davey straight into the sea, the observer being killed. Tuesday 25 September was the last day of operations for 812 Squadron. Lt Cdr F.A. Swanton led the

As the Firefly AS.7 was a failure it was used in the Observers Schools as two trainees could be accommodated in the rear cockpit. Firefly T.7 WJ202 was delivered to 796 Squadron at Culdrose.

last strike and then *HMS Glory* returned to Kure.

The Fireflies were cleaned and prepared for being handed over to the Australians of 817 Squadron. On 30 September, the Firefly Mk.5s went over to *HMAS Sydney* which replaced *HMS Glory* and assured the Commonwealth presence off Korea. 817 Squadron was normally equipped with Firefly AS.6s and had to exchange them for Mk.5s as their guns were needed for strafing.

The Australians started their strikes on 5 October; four Fireflies bombed a bridge. Further bridges were bombed on the two following days as well as buildings. Then, *HMAS Sydney* left the area and sailed for the east coast of Korea, reaching the Kojo area on 10 October. For two days, the Australian Fireflies and Sea Furies were involved in strikes against defensive positions, troops, barracks and communication lines, in addition to spotting for British and American ships.

The second patrol showed *HMAS Sydney* off the west coast on 14 October but operations were suspended as a typhoon directly struck the Commonwealth ships, badly damaging several aircraft and washing one Firefly overboard. The carrier was forced to return directly to Sasebo. *HMAS Sydney* was soon serviceable again and operations

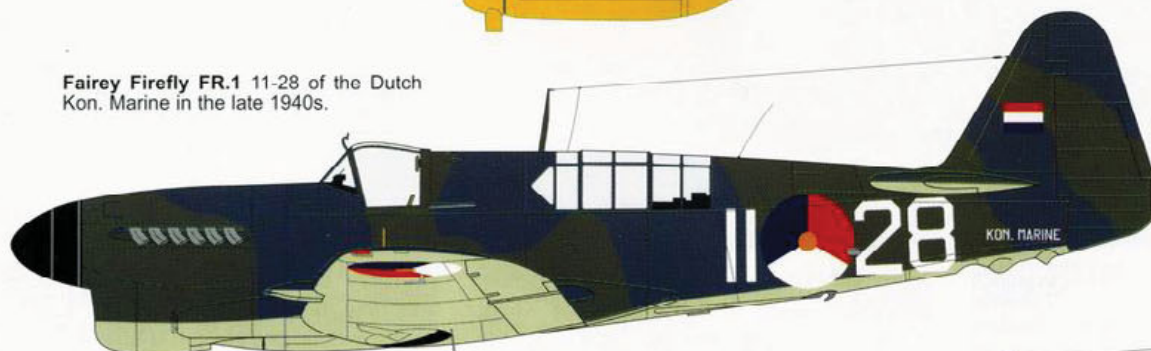
Loaded with two 1,000lb bombs a Firefly FR.5 of 812 Squadron about to take-off from *HMS Glory* for a strike against gun positions in Korea. Black and white recognition stripes were added at the request of the Americans as the Firefly had a resemblance to the Yak-9.



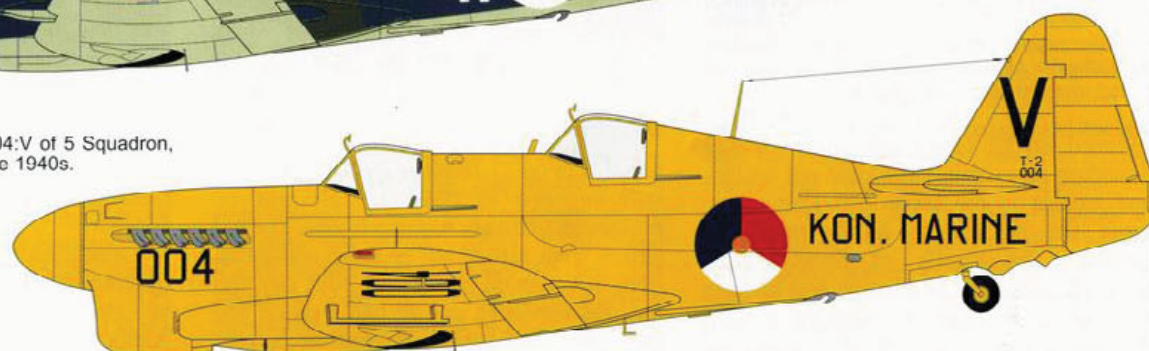
Fairey Firefly TT.5 WB271:889 of 725 Squadron Royal Australian Navy, Nowra in 1959..



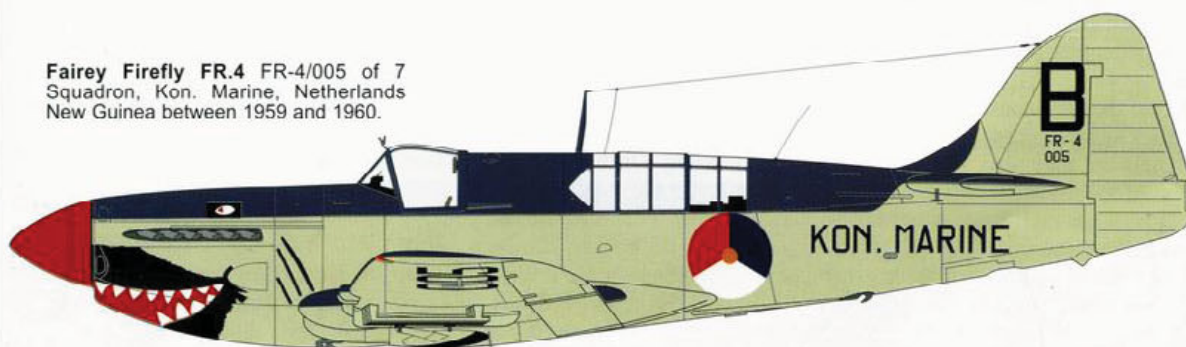
Fairey Firefly FR.1 11-28 of the Dutch Kon. Marine in the late 1940s.



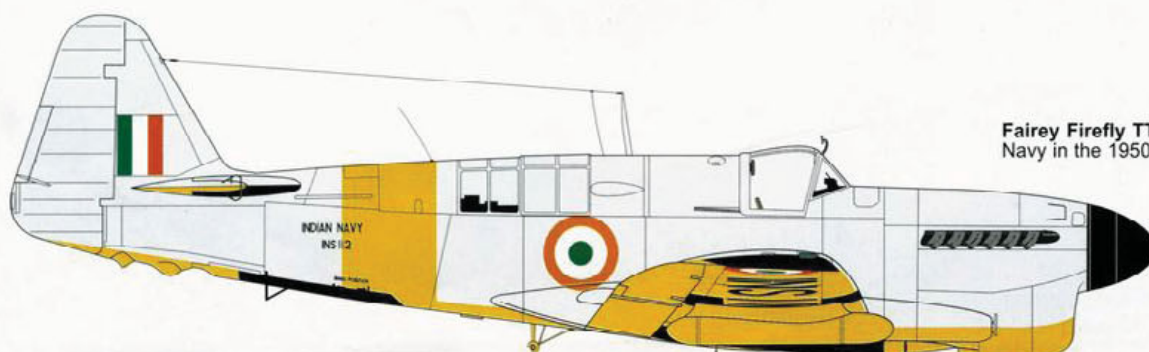
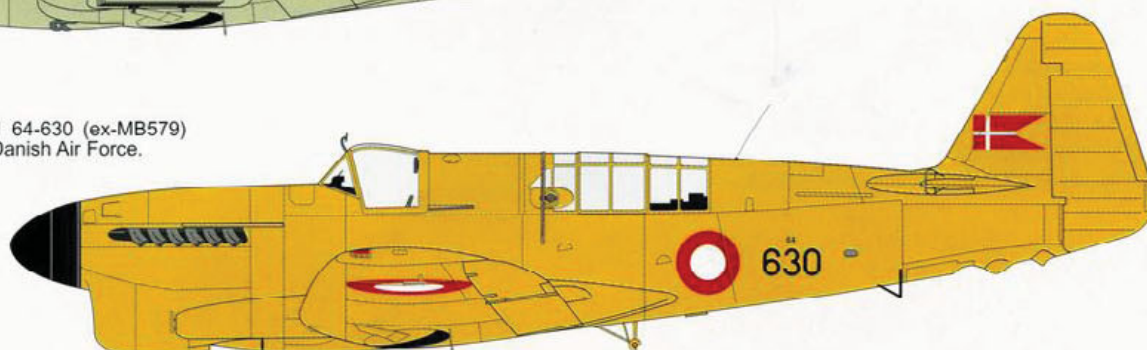
Fairey Firefly T.1 004:V of 5 Squadron, Kon.Marine in the late 1940s.



Fairey Firefly FR.4 FR-4/005 of 7 Squadron, Kon. Marine, Netherlands New Guinea between 1959 and 1960.



Fairey Firefly TT.1 64-630 (ex-MB579) of Esk.722, Royal Danish Air Force.



Fairey Firefly TT.1 INS112 of the Indian Navy in the 1950s.



A Firefly FR.5 of 817 Squadron waiting to launch from *HMAS Sydney* carrying two 500 lb bombs. The S.51 helicopter was lent to the ship for SAR duties by the Americans until the British carriers introduced the Westland Dragonfly

resumed on 18 October. Targets for 817 Squadron were mainly road and rail bridges and tunnels in the Haeju and Chinnampo areas. On the last day of the patrol, 26 October, the Firefly of Sub-Lt N.D. MacMillan and CPO J. Hancox was hit very hard by ground fire while attacking a tunnel near Sariwon and crash-landed in enemy territory. Fortunately, Sea Furies and RAAF Meteors provided cover for the crew pending the arrival of the rescue helicopter which was able to take them out.

HMAS Sydney was back off the west coast on 5 November. The Fireflies again concentrating on bridges and tunnels but they also conducted support missions for the troops. The patrol ended on 14 November and the next one began on 20 November, this time along the east coast with Hungnam harbour as the primary target. Two days later, the carrier took passage to the west coast but very poor weather, including snow storms, hampered operations until 27 November. The Australian aircraft carried out strikes for two days before the carrier withdrew to Kure.

On 7 December, *HMAS Sydney* returned off the west coast for preventive operations over the islands near Chinnampo as their invasion was expected. During an attack on a rail bridge, on 8 December, the Firefly of Lts A.L. Oakley and J.S. Hickson was hit and had to be force-landed on an Allied-held island. Besides the usual bombing of bridges, the Fireflies provided cover for a troop convoy sailing to Inchon, on 16 December. Operations ceased on 18 December and, after a replenishment at Kure, resumed in the same area on 29 December. In addition to a second escort mission for troop carrier ships, 817 Squadron provided support for Allied forces that evacuated the island of Yongwi-Do on 1

January 1952. By 5 January, *HMAS Sydney* had sailed south to the Haeju area where troops were concentrating. Next day, the weather deteriorated and finally *HMAS Sydney* retired to Japan on 8 January.

When the carrier returned to the operational area on 17 January, the Fireflies were still engaged in bombing missions on bridges and villages housing troops. The last strikes were carried out on troop concentrations at Yonan on 24 January. Next day, flying was cancelled due to bad weather and then *HMAS Sydney* returned to Sasebo before proceeding to Australia, ending its operational tour off Korea.

Operations were taken over by *HMS Glory* from February 1952. After she left the Korean theatre in September 1951 and her return, *HMS Glory* had sailed to Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong. On 6 February, *HMS Glory* left Sasebo for the west coast of Korea. This second operational tour began with area familiarisation flights and armed reconnaissances which ended by the bombing of a railway bridge. During the following days, the Fireflies carried out bombing raids on railway tunnels and bridges with 500 lb bombs, spottings and attacks of troop concentrations in villages.

The carrier went back to Japan on 16

February and returned to the operational area nine days later. The Fireflies activities on this second patrol were similar to the previous operations and included, on 27 February, an attack on three gun positions with 1,000 lb bombs. 812 Squadron also carried out a photographic reconnaissance of a radar station on 4 March, the day the patrol ended.

Operations resumed on 14 March with a spotting mission for *HMS Belfast's* guns by two Fireflies and the usual bridge bombings. Although the weather was sometimes poor during this patrol, *HMS Glory* performed a record of 105 sorties, with 812 Squadron taking part in 41 of these, on 17 March.

The ship remained at Sasebo from 23 March until the end of the month, returning to the operational area on 1 April. By the time the patrol ended on 9 April, 812 Squadron had raised its tally of tunnels, bridges and buildings destroyed. On 19 April, *HMS Glory* was back off the west coast of Korea for her last patrol. The Fireflies concentrated on tunnels and villages, destroying houses and stores. The final mission of 812 Squadron was carried out on 29 April and was typical of the attacks made during this tour. Lt Cdr Swanton led four Fireflies in a bombing



The main activity of British carrier aircraft in the Korean war was to attack lines of communication. This Firefly FR.5 of 812 Squadron is seen pulling up after having released its bombs and before returning to *HMS Glory*.

attack of the Chechung tunnel. On the way back to the carrier, the aircraft strafed villages and vehicles.

HMS Glory first returned to Sasebo for unloading ammunition and then set sail for Hong Kong where *HMS Ocean* was waiting. On 3 May, aircraft and equipment needed for *HMS Ocean's* operations off Korea was taken over by lighters. 812 Squadron took passage home aboard *HMS Glory* as far as Malta where they transferred to *HMS Theseus* for the last leg of the trip, reaching Lee-on-Solent on 4 June.

Meanwhile, *HMS Ocean* with 802 and 825 Squadrons aboard, had sailed for the war zone. Initial operations consisted of armed reces in the Ongjin and Haeju areas on 11 May. Tank hideouts, railway warehouses, camps and transport concentrations were hit. Lt S.G. Gandey's engine completely failed and was forced to ditch. He and Sub-Lt A. Bishop were later rescued by a US Grumman Albatross. Further attacks on villages were carried out on 13 and 14 May before the Fireflies shifted to close support for Allied troops on 16 May. Another Firefly was hit by small arms fire during a photographic run and could only reach the sea before being ditched. Both Lt Cdr C.K. Roberts, the CO of 825 Squadron, and Lt W.J. Cooper were rescued.

Despite several losses among the Air Group during the first days operations, they were able to exceed the previous sortie record in launching 123 sorties, 825 Squadron mounting 47, on 17 May. On the last day of this patrol, 19 May, during an armed recc in the Haeju and Changyon area, the Firefly of Lt Cdr T.J.C. Firefly FR.5s of 812 Squadron prepare for a Korean strike on 17 March 1952. The Air Group set a record of 105 sorties in one day from *HMS Glory* but this was later broke by *HMS Ocean's* aircraft.

Williamson-Napier was shot down killing both the pilot and his observer Aircrewman L.M.E. Edwards.

The following patrol started on 29 May. After strikes on villages and rail yards, both squadrons supported South Korean commandos using junks to land in the Ponghwai area on 1 June. Further CAS missions were undertaken on 5 June. The patrol ended on the following day with routine targets attacked by the Fireflies.

After replenishment at Kure, operations resumed on 16 June. In the following days, 825 Squadron hit miscellaneous targets, mainly firing rockets. As there was a resurgence of enemy activity on the ground, the Fireflies and Sea Furies had plenty of opportunities to attack troop concentrations causing havoc among those on the ground. On 24 June, the aircraft of *HMS Ocean* were directed against electrical power installations in the Haeju and Changyon areas before the carrier sailed to Sasebo.

During the fourth patrol, which lasted from 4 to 12 July, *HMS Ocean* again operated off the west coast. An accident caused the death of Lt R.C. Hunter on the first day after he had ditched his aircraft, and only the observer Lt J.R.A. Taylor was rescued. On 11 July, the Air Group was involved in a concentrated strike over Pyongyang, in co-operation with USAF, USN, USMC and RAAF aircraft. Under heavy AA fire, 825 Squadron rocketed railway yards where a number of large crates were lying.

HMS Ocean left Sasebo on 21 July for launching the next series of strikes at dawn. This patrol was significant as the Fireflies encountered MiG-15s on 27 July. *HMS Ocean* had been forced to operate north in the Yellow sea due to the poor weather south of Chinnampo. On returning from an attack

in the Kyomipo area during which a Firefly was hit by flak, a section of 825 Squadron was engaged by three MiGs, two of them making a fast firing pass. With their aircraft severely damaged, Lts R.D.R. Hawkesworth and T. Clancy decided to land on an emergency beach at Paengyong. The Firefly hit during the strike was also unable to reach the carrier and ditched in the sea west of Choda; Lts P. Watkinson and C.J. Fursey were recovered. The Fireflies next carried out rocket attacks on troops, buildings, gun positions and electrical installations until the end of the patrol on 30 July.

Flying operations resumed on 9 August aimed at railway lines for the first two days. Despite the presence of many MiG-15s which engaged Sea Furies on several occasions, the Fireflies continued striking North Korean targets until 19 August when *HMS Ocean* proceeded to Japan.

The following patrol, lasting from 27 August to 5 September, was calmer as no enemy jets were encountered. 825 Squadron recorded a loss on the first day when Lt W.LeG. Jacob, with Aircrewman C. Hearnshaw, ditched off Chodo island after being hit while attacking a radar station. In addition to the usual bombings and rocketings, the Fireflies provided cover for a commando raid near Ongjin on 30 August.

When 802 and 825 Squadrons returned to operations on 14 September, the Fireflies were mainly tasked to deal with gun positions, vehicle shelters and rail yards, using rockets. The patrol ended on 24 September. *HMS Ocean* remaining at Kure until 2 October. As usual, 825 Squadron carried out photo reconnaissances and rocket attacks on gun positions and villages housing troops during the 11-day long patrol.

The tenth, and last, patrol began on 24 October with a successful attack on sampans





During *HMS Ocean's* first period of Korean duty in 1952 many aircraft were shot down or damaged by flak and MiG-15s. Firefly FR.5, WB409, of 825 Squadron is seen before the black and white identification stripes were introduced.

near Pungsan. The remainder of the operations were similar to those carried out during the previous patrols. They included spotting for ships and attacks on villages, troops, gun positions and electrical installations, as well as support for commando raids. Flying on the last operational day, 30 October, was affected by engine rough running due to fuel contamination; only three Firefly strikes were launched.

With her tour of duty off Korea completed, *HMS Ocean* set course for Sasebo, then on to Hong Kong where she rendezvoused with the relieving carrier. *HMS Glory*, formerly serving in the Mediterranean, which had embarked the Firefly FR.5s of 821 Squadron and the Sea Furies of 801 Squadron and she had sailed from Malta for the Far East on 9 October 1952 for a third tour of duty in the Korean war zone. The Fireflies had their ASH radar, removed and replaced by a long-range fuel tank. Several missions were flown with only the pilot aboard the Fireflies.

Early in the morning of 12 November, *HMS Glory* was off the west coast of Korea. The Fireflies of 821 Squadron continued the interdiction and harassment work on villages and lines of communication. On 18 November, Lt D.F. Robbins was hit during an attack on an electrical installation and

was forced to ditch his aircraft. A rescue helicopter soon picked him up. On the following day, the Fireflies made a sweep at dawn and succeeded in blowing up four railway trucks and two lorries before the carrier retired to Sasebo.

The next patrol, from 29 November to 6 December, was similar to the previous one, except for Lt J.G. Marshall. Following an attack on troops in the Haeju area on 6 December, his Firefly was probably hit by flak and had to ditch some 20 miles from the carrier. Fortunately he was rescued by the Dragonfly.

After a rest at Kure, operations resumed on 17 December. The missions of 821 Squadron were mainly directed against road and railway lines, in addition to some spotting. On 20 December, Lt P.G. Fogden was attacking a junk when an explosion occurred in the starboard wing, causing the crash of the Firefly and its immediate sinking with the pilot trapped inside. As this accident seemed to be caused by faulty ammunition, it was decided to use the aircraft's guns only in self-defence and to stop any strafing. 821 Squadron concentrated on dive-bombing of railways but again lost an aircraft, on 25 December, when Lt R.E. Barrett was hit at the end of his dive. The patrol ended on 26 December and was the most tragic one for

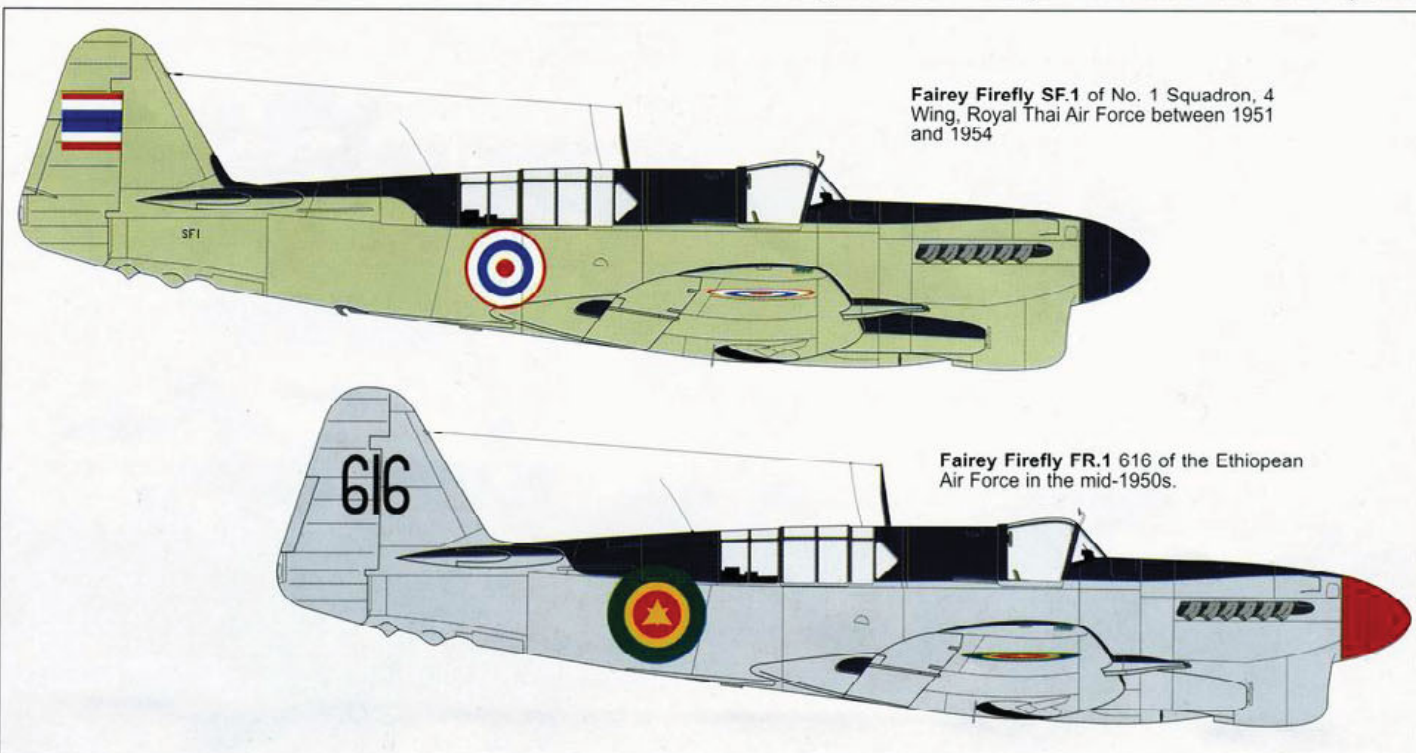
821 Squadron, having lost two pilots on operations plus a crew in a flying accident on 15 December.

HMS Glory set course for Iwakuni where replacement aircraft were embarked while the suspected ammunition was unloaded. The carrier carried out a short patrol off Korea from 5 to 11 January 1953. On 6 January, the Firefly piloted by Lt W.R. Heaton was hit while attacking vehicles and had to be ditched off the coast; the pilot being rescued by a US Army helicopter. The carrier then remained at anchor in Kure until 19 January when she departed for her fifth patrol which lasted until 28 January. The aircraft concentrated on troops and guns in the coastal areas and roads to the coast were daily searched for transport.

The next patrol took place from 6 to 15 February 1953. In addition to the strikes on troop concentrations and transport vehicles, 821 Squadron provided a Firefly each day, armed with two depth charges, to carry out an anti-submarine search as North Korean submarines were said to be operating in the Yellow Sea. Three AS patrols ended in deck-landing accidents and as many write-offs but, fortunately, no loss of life.

HMS Glory was back off Korea from 26 February until 6 March and carried out three further patrols until the end of April. During these first two patrols, 821 Squadron mainly attacked troop concentrations and bridges but poor weather with dense fog hampered flying. During the tenth patrol at the end of April, as prisoners of war were being exchanged and driven along main roads, the aircraft stopped attacks on road transport.

The last patrol began on 5 May. Due to the Armistice negotiations, no low level attacks against heavily defended targets were permitted and other restrictions were imposed on the crews. Nevertheless on 10 May, the Firefly of Lt W.R. Sherlock was hit by small



Fairey Firefly SF.1 of No. 1 Squadron, 4 Wing, Royal Thai Air Force between 1951 and 1954

Fairey Firefly FR.1 616 of the Ethiopian Air Force in the mid-1950s.

Returning from a strike over Korea this Firefly FR.5 is about to catch the wire on landing.

arms fire whilst strafing troops on the Ongjin peninsula and ditched. The CO, Lt Cdr J.R.N. Gardner, led the last strike of 821 Squadron over Korea on 14 May. Three days later, *HMS Glory* arrived at Sasebo where *HMS Ocean* was waiting to relieve her. *HMS Glory* then took passage home; 821 Squadron disbanding on the way to the UK, on 25 May.

HMS Ocean took over operations in May 1953. The Air Group consisted in the Sea Furies of 807 Squadron and the Firefly FR.5s of 810 Squadron, both units having already completed a tour in Korea aboard *HMS Theseus*. After some delays due to bad weather, flying really started on 23 May. Attacks on roads and gun positions were carried out until 30 May.

After a stay in Japan which included the celebration of the Queen's Coronation, *HMS Ocean* was back off Korea on 9 June. The Air Group was engaged in CAS for the ground forces which faced an important Chinese offensive intended to provide them with a favourable situation for the armistice. They also covered the evacuation of the islands north of the Han estuary. The carrier proceeded to Japan on 17 June.

On 25 June *HMS Ocean* left Kure for her third patrol. Again, the main effort was in support missions for the ground forces. On 29 June, 810 Squadron recorded the loss of one Firefly due to enemy fire. The pilot, Lt B.V. Bacon, was successfully picked up by a US helicopter. Operations ceased on 5 July when the carrier set course for Sasebo.

The next patrol, which lasted from 15 to 23 July, was noteworthy as being the last

Two Firefly FR.5s from 810 Squadron flying over HMCS Nootka which was acting as escort for *HMS Theseus*. This destroyer rescued the Air Group Commander when he ditched his Sea Fury after having been hit by small arms fire.



war operations of *HMS Ocean*. In addition, three Fireflies, specially equipped with APX-6 radars, were disembarked on 16 July to Kimpo following a US 5th Air Force request. This detachment was called to act as night fighters against the Polikarpov Po-2 biplanes carrying out nuisance raids on the US bases. A total of 31 night patrols were made, including some chases but without any definite interceptions, before the armistice was declared and the detachment turned to police duties along the demarcation line. The three Fireflies finally rejoined 810 Squadron on 10 August.

Meanwhile *HMS Ocean* had launched the next series of strikes on 16 July. Owing to catapult failure once more, the aircraft were launched by RATOG. Unfortunately, a malfunctioning rocket caused the loss of a Firefly and its crew, Lts A.J.D. Evans and K.M. Thomas. The remainder of the patrol consisted in close support for the Army and the continuation of strikes on the roads and troop positions. The carrier left the operational area for Japan on 23 July.

While *HMS Ocean* was in Kure, an

armistice was signed on 27 July 1953. Although the carrier remained in the area for three more months, only peace-keeping patrols were carried out. After completing its spell on duty, *HMS Ocean* sailed to the UK in December. 810 Squadron was officially disbanded when *HMS Ocean* reached Plymouth on 17 December 1953. She was relieved off Korea by *HMAS Sydney* which assured the peace-keeping presence for a further six months.

VOLUNTEER RESERVE

When the Air Branch of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve was formed, the Firefly was chosen to become the standard equipment for the anti-submarine squadrons. Among the first units to commission was 1830 Squadron on 15 August 1947. Although the other RNVR squadrons were specifically fighter or AS, 1830 Squadron operated a mixed fleet of three Seafires and three Firefly FR.1s at Abbotsinch. Just seven months after formation, 1830 Squadron concentrated its activities on anti-submarine





Above: Carrying unusual markings this Firefly FR.1 of 1843 Squadron, Scottish Air Division RNVR, is seen over Ben Nevis. Below: Aircraft of the Channel Air Division RNVR were pooled between 1840 and 1842 Squadrons at Culham.



warfare and discarded its Seafires. The squadron's complement grew to 15 Fireflies. Although the Firefly FR.1s were not suitable for AS work, even if they carried an ASH radar, they soldiered on even after October 1951 when Firefly AS.6s were at last assigned to 1830 Squadron. In November 1955, Avengers superseded the Fireflies.

From 1949, the RNVR squadrons spent a fortnight each summer either embarked aboard an aircraft carrier or on intensive practice at Eglinton, Culdrose, or Hal Far. This shore training focused on firing with cannon and R.P.s and dropping of bombs. 1830 Squadron first embarked aboard *HMS Illustrious* from 27 August to 10 September.

The following year, the squadron went on 'holiday' to Hal far and, in 1951, joined *HMS Vengeance*. This was the last embarkation as the following annual practice camps were all ashore.

In the fifties, the need for greater ASW strength to face the Soviet submarine threat led to the formation of five further RNVR squadrons, which were dedicated to ASW and were given numbers in the 1840 series. First to form was 1840 Squadron at Culham, on 14 April 1951. Initially equipped with Firefly FR.4s, 1840 Squadron moved to Ford on 30 June where Firefly AS.6s were allocated during the next month. During the summer 1952, 1840 Squadron spent a fort-

night aboard *HMS Triumph* and two years later they embarked aboard *HMS Illustrious*. In February 1956, Gannets began to arrive at Ford and the Fireflies replaced within three months.

The second AS squadron to form was 1841 Squadron at Stretton, on 18 August 1952. Although the Firefly AS.6 was planned to become the backbone of the AS units of the RNVR, not enough examples were available. 1841 Squadron had to fly on obsolete Firefly FR.1s for two years. Firefly AS.6s were finally delivered in March 1955 but, by this time, they were in the process of giving way to Avengers. The conversion on to the American aircraft was undertaken in December 1955.

The two following RNVR units commissioned were 1830A and 1840A Squadrons, which officially formed on 1 October 1952. Actually these two squadrons were created by transferring half the aircrew of 1830 and 1840 Squadrons, respectively, and by pooling the aircraft. On 28 March 1953, both new squadrons were re-named 1842 and 1843 Squadrons. As the aircraft were shared, 1830 and 1843 Squadrons operated on alternate weekends at Donibristle and 1840 and 1842 Squadrons did the same at Ford, except when both squadrons were on duty on the same weekend. For the summer training, all aircrew from each base went together.

1844 Squadron formed at Bramcote on 15 February 1954. Pending the arrival of Firefly AS.6s in December 1955, 1844 Squadron operated Firefly FR.5s. Two annual deployments were carried out to Hal Far in September 1954 and August 1955. Only three months after the Firefly AS.6s had arrived, 1844 Squadron converted on to Avengers, in March 1956.

In 1952, the RNVR had been re-organised and all units were attached to a territorial division. 1830 and 1843 Squadrons came under control of the Scottish Air Division. At Ford, the Channel Air Division gathered 1840 and 1842 Squadrons. RNAS Stretton became the base of the Northern Air Division which included 1841 Squadron. The Midland Air Division formed at Bramcote with 1844 Squadron. The last one, the Southern Air Division, was only host to fighter squadrons.

FIREFLY MK.7

In the late forties, it was anticipated that the





Fairey Gannet, intended to replace the Firefly AS.5 and AS.6, was going to enter much later in service than originally foreseen. Immediately, steps were taken to rejuvenate the Firefly and Fairey proposed to the Admiralty a revised version of the AS.6. The Royal Navy agreed about the necessity of an interim anti-submarine aircraft pending the arrival of the Gannet in quantity and allowed Fairey to develop the Firefly AS.7. The order which followed also gave the opportunity to fill the gap on the assembly line at Heaton Chapel.

The Firefly AS.7 appeared quite different

from the AS.6 in many aspects. One of the most obvious differences was the provision of a large canopy in the rear fuselage, over a cockpit which seated two radar operators, making a total crew of three. Even though the radar was initially the same as that on the AS.5 and AS.6 versions, additional equipment required the presence of the second observer. Later the ASV 19A radar was selected in place of the ASH set, necessitating a larger wing nacelle. The Firefly AS.7 was fully equipped for day and night operations, and carried extensive radio and radar equipment similar to those developed for the Gannet.

The subsequent increase in weight led to the fitting of another type of Griffon engine; the Mark 59 which developed 2,455 hp at take-off and used water-methanol injection. The Griffon 59 required the engine air intake to be enlarged. The leading-edge radiators disappeared and were replaced by an annular cowling similar to that used on the Barracuda Mk.V and larger than that fitted on the early models of Firefly. The wing plan form was modified; span and wing area increased to compensate for the higher weight and the shape was slightly modified,

The Scottish Air Division's aircraft lined up at RNAS Abbotsinch. 1830 and 1843 flew a mixed bag of Firefly FR.1s, T.3s, FR.4s, AS.5s and AS.6s during the first half of the 1950s before being re-equipped with the Avenger.

A formation of 1843, or 1830 Squadron Fireflies (depending on the weekend). The two nearest are T.3s, PP411 and PP425, which looked like FR.1s but had the armament removed

featuring leading-edge extensions and enlarged ailerons as well as reverting to the original full span, without clipped tips. The undercarriage legs were also increased by two in in length. Contrary to the previous marks, the tail-wheel was non-retractable on the Mk.7. Despite the fact that it could be loaded with offensive stores under the wings, no guns were mounted as the Firefly AS.7 was intended to perform only a hunter role. Provision was made for sonobuoys.

One prototype was built from a Mk.I airframe, MB757, with a Mk.4 empennage. It was actually a mock-up as no equipment was installed and the rear canopy was a dummy. The first genuine Firefly AS.7, WJ215, made its maiden flight at White Waltham on 22 May 1951 and served as a development aircraft like the following machine, both being AS.6 airframes. Flight trials of WJ215 showed that the big radiator and the longer forward fuselage had a destabilising effect and, in order to improve the lateral stability, the fin and rudder were redesigned and heightened, featuring a horn-balance and a longer tab. This new tailplane was fitted to the second development aircraft, WJ216. Despite the introduction of the revised fin and rudder, the Mark 7 still suf-



ferred from poor directional and longitudinal characteristics. In addition, the forward view was worse, making the aircraft unsuitable for deck landings.

All these drawbacks led to the revision of the initial order. Although a total of 337 Firefly AS.7s had been ordered, only a few were built during the second half of 1951 at Heaton Chapel, in order to prepare the Hayes plant for Gannet production. In March 1953, the USA provided Avenger TBM-3Es which actually filled the gap before the Gannet entered service with the Fleet Air Arm. Avengers were supplied under the Mutual Defence Aid Program and put an end to the hope of operational life for the Firefly AS.7.

Plans for ordering the Firefly AS.7 were thus changed. A batch of 152 aircraft was cancelled and the remaining airframes to be built were converted to trainers, becoming Firefly T.7s. The intention was to train observers and radar operators and to operate only from shore bases. The deck arrester gear was deleted. The one hundred and fifty-first and last Firefly T.7 was delivered in December 1953.

Firefly T.7s were first supplied to 719 Squadron which operated as the Naval Air

Anti-Submarine School at RNAS Eglinton from March 1953 until June 1956. As deliveries went ahead, the Observer School - combining 750 and 796 Squadrons at RNAS Culdrose - started to replace its Barracuda TR.3s and Firefly AS.5/6s with Firefly T.7s in April 1953. All Observer School's T.7s were taken over by 796 Squadron in March 1955 and it was not until December 1957 that the last T.7 was phased out in favour of the Gannet. Other Firefly T.7s supplemented T.2s in February 1955 at 765 Squadron acting as the Piston Engine Pilot Pool. The last user was 1840 Squadron, a RNVR unit which received some Firefly T.7s for a short period in 1956 in order to ease observers' transition on the Gannet.

TARGET TUGS

The first mark to be converted as a target tug for the FAA was a Firefly FR.4 which took the designation TT.4. For this conversion, Fairey retained a different system from that used on the previous Swedish TT.1. On the TT.4, an attachment point for an air-driven ML Type G winch was fitted in a nacelle under the fuselage centre-section. The TT.4 had its guns deleted and was fitted with a

Firefly U.8 drones were partly converted from existing Mk.7 airframes and the remainder built as part of the T.7 order. Externally the U.8 differed from the T.7 in having two pods on the wing tips and an arrester hook to help stop unmanned aircraft.

winch control in the cockpit. The same target-tow kit was installed on some Firefly AS.5s, known as TT.5s. The number of FR.4s and AS.5s modified to the target-towing configuration is unspecified but 28 TT.4s were initially ordered by the FAA.

First Firefly TT.4s were delivered to RNAS Lee-on-Solent for 771 Squadron; the Fleet Requirements Unit, in November 1951. At least one TT.5 was received in June 1952. Three months later, the FRU was moved to RNAS Ford. On 17 August 1955, 771 Squadron combined with 703 Squadron to form 700 Squadron; the Trials and Requirements Unit. It continued to fly nine Firefly TT.4s until its role was taken over by a civil operator; Airwork FRU, in February 1957.

TARGET DRONES

In the early fifties, with the development of the guided missile, there was a requirement for a pilotless target drone. This aircraft was to be used for missile trials carried out by the Royal Aircraft Establishment in Great Britain and in Australia, at the Woomera range. By this time, the Firefly was beginning to be withdrawn from front-line squadrons and, more particularly, several Mk.7s had become redundant. The Firefly also seemed to be an effective high-performance target drone.

Modification of six Firefly T.7s to U.8 target drone configuration started in 1952. The designation 'U' indicated unmanned. The conversion consisted in fitting a radio con-

Two Firefly U.9s of 728B Squadron based in Malta for guided missile trials. Both aircraft had their camera pods removed. Each pod carried four cameras to record trials as the missiles were usually planned to miss the drones.





A Firefly U.9 of 728B Squadron shepherded by another drone in unmanned flight over the Mediterranean. Radio controlled flights were not easy and required experienced pilots during take-off and landing which was the main cause of accidents. Both aircraft had the nose cowling painted black.

trol gear which allowed the aircraft to be flown without a crew. The system was developed by the RAE and Fairey carried out its installation and testing. The possibility of being flown normally by a crew was also maintained. Externally the Firefly U.8 differed from the T.7 in having a deck-arrester hook and two pods at the wing tips, each carrying four cameras to record trials. The deck-arrester hook was re-introduced to help stop the aircraft during unmanned flights.

The first Firefly U.8, WM810, made its initial flight from Ringway on 30 December 1953. In addition to the six T.7s modified to U.8 standard, Fairey received an order for a further 34 target drones. The first two of these were converted on the assembly line from T.7 components. These were the last Fireflies to be built, the very last being delivered on 20 April 1956. The increasing need for drones due to the greater use of guided missiles led to the conversion of 40 Firefly Mk.5s. Aircraft of this last batch received the designation U.9. Modifications were similar to those used for the U.8 and radio equipment was the same. The maiden flight of the first U.9 took place on 13 December 1956.

Several of unmanned Fireflies were provided to the RAE for use over Cardigan Bay on the Aberporth range off the coast of Wales. They flew from the RAE airfield at Llanbedr mainly to assist in the trials for the Firestreak air-to-air missile. The first Firefly U.8 shot down was destroyed on 29 September 1955 by a Firestreak launched from a Venom.

Other Firefly U.8/9s equipped 728B Squadron from 13 January 1958. This squadron was the pilotless target drone unit of the FAA and provided aircraft for the trials of the Seaslug medium range surface-to-air missile. Formed at RNAS Stretton, the squadron moved to Hal Far, Malta, in February. After familiarisation with radio-controlled flying techniques, the first pilotless flight took place on 8 July 1958. The

aircraft was handed over to *HMS Girdle Ness*, the guided weapons trials ship, which launched an unarmed Seaslug missile. Unfortunately the aircraft was damaged on landing back at Hal Far as it skidded to port and the undercarriage collapsed. The radio-controlled landing was the more critical phase, other Fireflies being lost in comparable circumstances.

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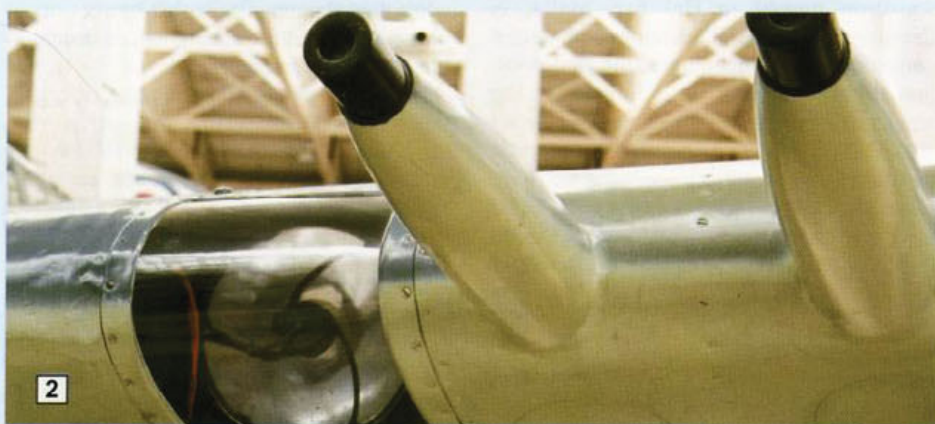


Above: Two Firefly U.9s of 728B Squadron on the flight line at Hal Far. 728B Squadron only operated from Malta and flew Firefly U.9s, Meteor U.15s and U.16s together with Canberra U.14s for Seaslug and Firestreak test programmes. Below: Look no hands! With no pilot on board, a Firefly U.9 being flown to the range where a controller on board *HMS Girdle Ness*, the weapons trials ship, took over during the missile firing.





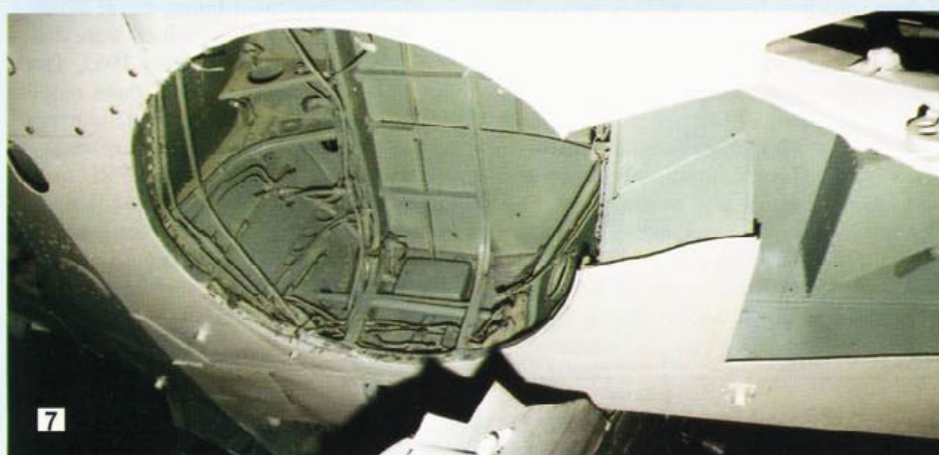
1. The undercarriage doors on the Firefly were quite complicated. Duxford's F.1, Z2033, is shown. 2. The cannon and landing light on the same aircraft. 3. The observer's canopy centre panels hinge upwards for access. SEAC markings grace this preserved example. 4. Starboard undercarriage leg and the interior panelling on the doors. 5. The Duxford Firefly's tailwheel was pointing the wrong way round when this picture was taken. 6. The Royal Canadian Navy have preserved VH142, an FR.4 showing the wing fold system and easy to model interior. 7. The wheel well interior is similar on most Fireflies. The colour can vary but this one appears to be in Dark Sea Grey. 8. The inner wing root radiators on VH142 show two dividers on the interior also in this view the actuating leg for the retraction of the undercarriage.



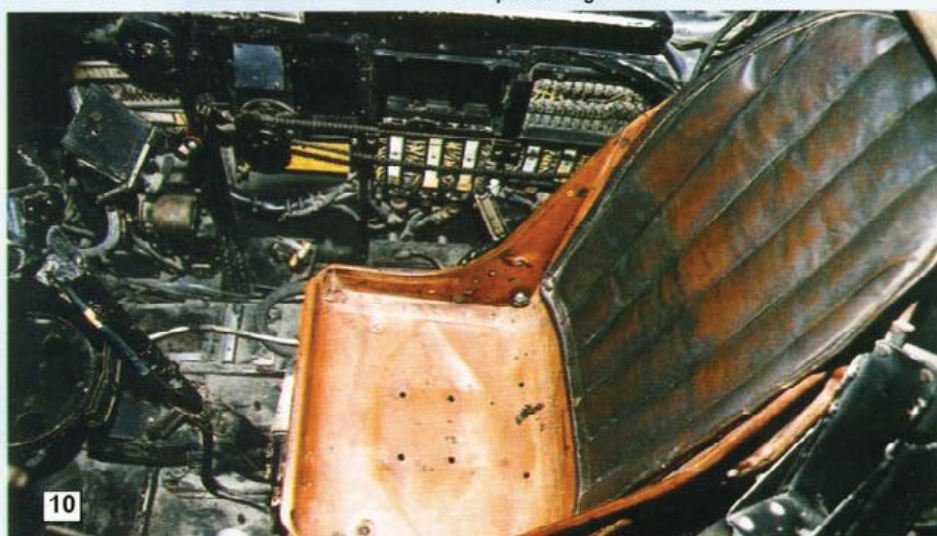


Fairey Firefly in detail

Pictures by Geoffrey Bussy and Tony Buttler



9. The cockpit of Firefly Mk.1 Z2033. The seat has a bucket shape for the parachute and a padded back in dark green. 10. The same cockpit looking at the starboard side.





Continued from page 53

The trials programme lasted three years and the Fireflies were supplemented with Meteor drones from July 1959 and with Canberra drones from May 1961. In addition to the Seaslug programme, Firefly U.8/9s were involved in the trials of the Firestreak missile, several being fired by *HMS Victorious* based Sea Venoms of 893 Squadron in November and December 1958. As the Firestreak was an infra-red homing missile, electric lamps had to be fitted in the rear compartment of the camera pods. 728B Squadron's Fireflies also acted as targets for AA ships gunners, mainly in the last few months in order to get rid of the aircraft before returning to the UK. The last Firefly flight with the FAA took place on 29 November 1961 and the aircraft never landed back as it was shot down by the guns of *HMS Duchess*. 728B Squadron disbanded on 2 December 1961.

FOREIGN FIREFLIES

Since World War 2, Svensk Flygtjänst AB - a civil operator - had provided airborne target-towing services for the Swedish Army. To fulfil this task, the company looked in 1948 for an effective target-tug and asked Fairey to develop a version of the Firefly. Fairey modified 14 Firefly F.Is to TT.1 standard by the addition of a windmill-operated type B.Mk.2B winch. The experiences of previous Fairey Battle target-tugs helped Fairey for the installation of a similar system. The winch was mounted between the tank and the seat in the navigator's compartment. The forward cockpit glazing of this compartment was replaced by a metal panel from which protruded, on the port side, a winch arm carrying the swivelling propeller unit. Two kinds of targets could be towed; the usual low drag sleeves and glider targets. The maximum length of the tow-line was 7,000 ft. Aircraft were suitably equipped to enable them to carry sufficient sleeves so that they could be changed in flight.

Only 12 Firefly TT.1s were delivered to Svensk Flygtjänst AB; the last two machines being diverted to Denmark. Group Capt. G. Slade, chief test pilot of the Fairey Company, delivered the first Firefly TT.1 by air to Sweden in December 1948. Four further Firefly TT.1s were later acquired. In June 1964 all were withdrawn from service.

Denmark received two Firefly TT.1s, originally converted for the Svensk Flygtjänst AB. The Flyvervaabnet adopted the TT.1 as standard target-towing equipment on behalf of all three services; Army, Navy and Air Force. The first Danish Firefly was flown to Copenhagen on 4 October 1951 by Sqdn Ldr P.E. Rye Hansen and Capt. A.M. Kock. Four further Firefly Mk.1s were received from the RCN in 1952. These fighters were converted in Denmark to the target tug role by fitting Fairey kits. In 1957, the three surviving Danish Fireflies were sold to the Svensk Flygtjänst AB but were only used for spares.

Although Ethiopia was liberated by British forces in 1941, it was not until 1946 that the Imperial Ethiopian Air Force was formed with help from a Swedish aristocrat. In the late forties, the IEAF operated communication and transport aircraft. Fireflies were then chosen to equip the first Ethiopian fighter squadron because of their suitability for defence duties in the high altitudes and temperatures of that country. Despite Ethiopia's order for 35 Fireflies in December 1950, only an initial batch of nine machines were made available. All aircraft were Royal Navy surplus from storage at Abbotsinch and were completely reconditioned in Fairey's factory at Stockport. The first of eight Firefly F.Is and a sole T.2 for the IEAF was accepted at Ringway on 20 September 1951 and was flown out to Ethiopia by easy

Displaying the colour scheme of Firefly Mk.5 VH127 of 812 Squadron during the Korean war, this aircraft has been preserved in the Fleet Air Arm Museum though is actually a Firefly TT.4

stages. Introduction of the Firefly allowed the creation of the first fighter unit, which supplemented some Saab 17 light attack bombers, based at the training station at Bishoftu, 30 miles south of the capital. As the British government vetoed any further delivery, Ethiopia turned to Canada and acquired 15 additional Fireflies, including 11 FR.1s, three T.1s and another T.2. It is also probable that a Canadian Firefly FR.4 reached Ethiopia. The Canadian Fireflies were ferried by *HIMCS Magnificent* to the UK in February 1954 and later sent to Ethiopia.

Despite the fact that the Thai Landese forces had been an ally of Japan and had operated Japanese aircraft during World War 2, the British gave them aid and assistance to form a modern air force in the post-war period. Thailand placed an order for 30 Spitfire Mk.XIVs and 12 Fireflies. The first delivery of Fireflies took place during the summer of 1951. The batch consisted of 10 Firefly F.Is and two T.2s. All Fireflies were ex-RN aircraft and were reconditioned by Fairey during the second half of 1951 before being despatched by sea in crates. Although they were bought for the Royal Thai Navy Air Division, the Fireflies finally entered service within the Royal Thai Air Force due to political disagreements. In March 1952, 1 Squadron, operating from Don Muang, was operational but soon ceased flying them in March 1954. The RTAF had by then switched to American supplies.

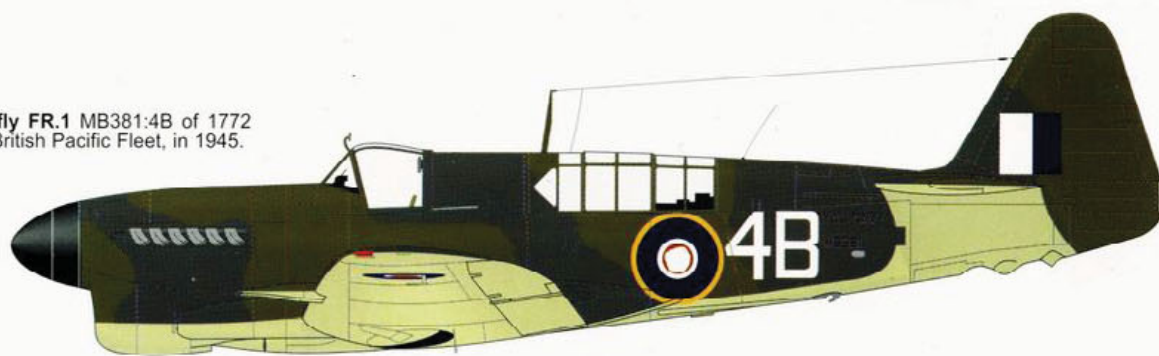
The newly-formed Indian naval aviation bought two Firefly TT.1s which were delivered to Cochin on 14 February 1955. Three further TT.1s arrived in India three months later. Five Firefly TT.4s were finally exported in September 1958. Indian Fireflies were primarily used at Cochin by the FRU to tow drogue targets for the Fleet's anti-aircraft gunnery practices. The TT.4 versions were fully armed with four 20 mm guns and were able to carry offensive stores beneath the wings, in addition to long-range fuel tanks.

Firefly kits, decals and accessories

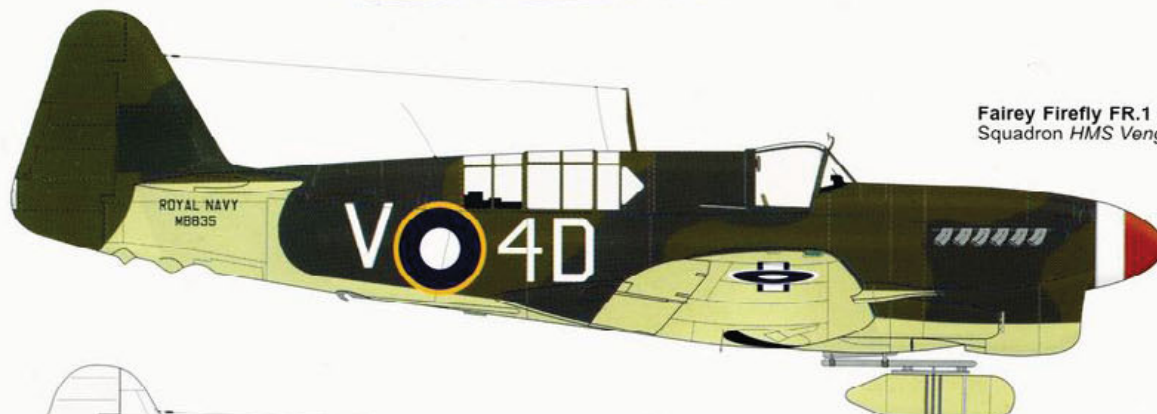
Scale	Type	Manufacturer	Reference	Remarks
1:72	Firefly Mk.5	Airfix	2018	Complete kit
1:72	Firefly FR.1	Modelcraft	72003	Vacuform kit
1:72	Firefly Mk.1	Frog/Novo	0294	Complete kit
1:72	Firefly FR.1	SMER	0855	Ex-Frog kit
1:72	Firefly	Airwaves	72182	Wing fold mechanism, etched brass
1:72	Firefly Mk.5k	Airwaves	72164	Etched parts for Airfix kit
1:72	Firefly	Engines and things	72091	Griffon engine
1:72	Firefly AS.7	Airways	AY16	Vacuform kit
1:72	Firefly Mk.1	Chematic	72257	Ex-Frog kit
1:72	Firefly Mk.1	Eastern Express	72273	Ex-Frog kit
1:72	Firefly	Falcon	1972	Canopies
1:72	Firefly AS.7/T.7	Magna Models	7202	Resin kit
1:72	Firefly U.8	Magna Models	7231	Resin kit
1:72	Firefly T.1	Maintrack Models	7221	Fuselage only
1:72	Firefly F.1	Plastyk	116	Copy of Frog mould
1:48	Firefly	Dutch Decals	48028	Decals
1:48	Firefly Mk. 1	Flightpath	48020	Multi-media kit
1:48	Firefly FR.4-5	Flightpath	48050	Former multi-media PP

Not all of the kits and decals listed are available. The list shows only those that have been produced

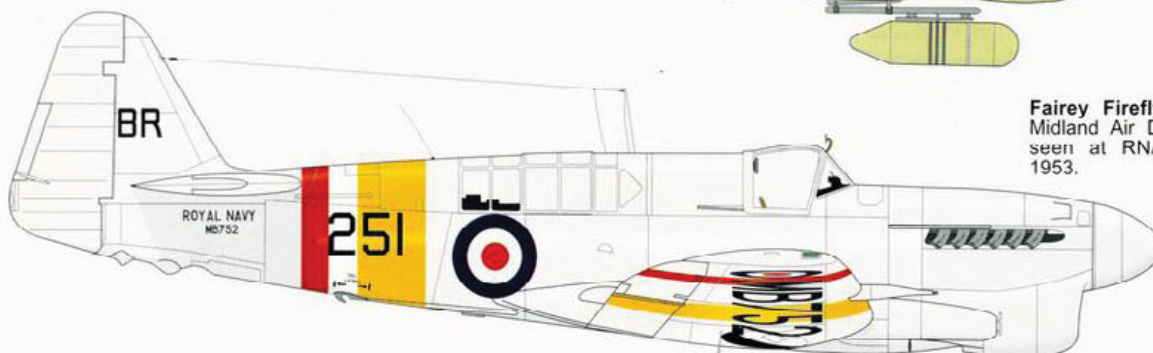
Fairey Firefly FR.1 MB381:4B of 1772 Squadron, British Pacific Fleet, in 1945.



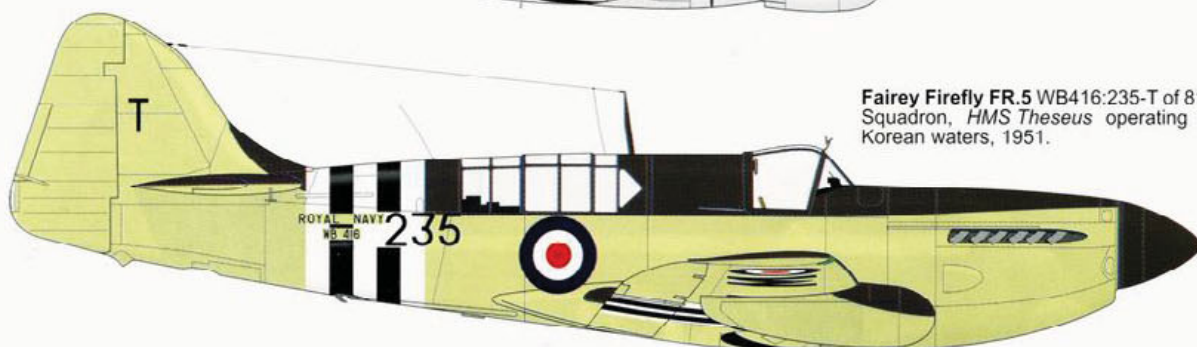
Fairey Firefly FR.1 MB635:V-4D of 812 Squadron HMS Vengeance in 1946.



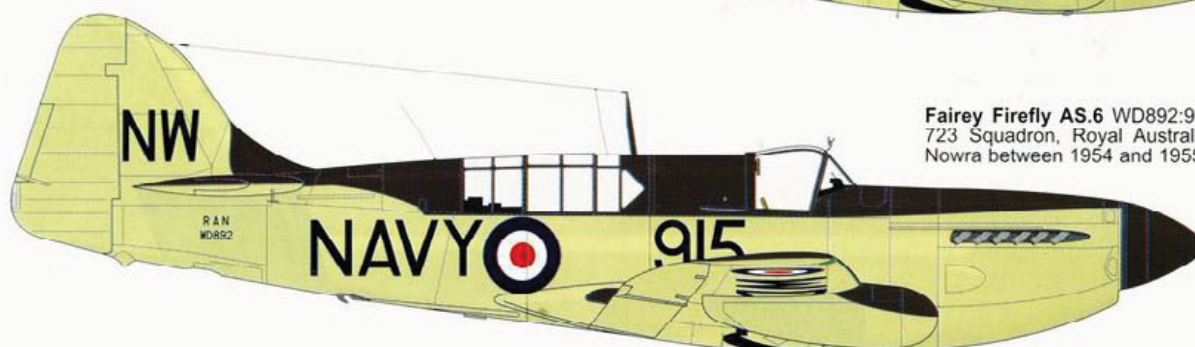
Fairey Firefly F.1 MB752:251-BR of Midland Air Division, RNAS Bramcote seen at RNAS Ford, 26 September 1953.



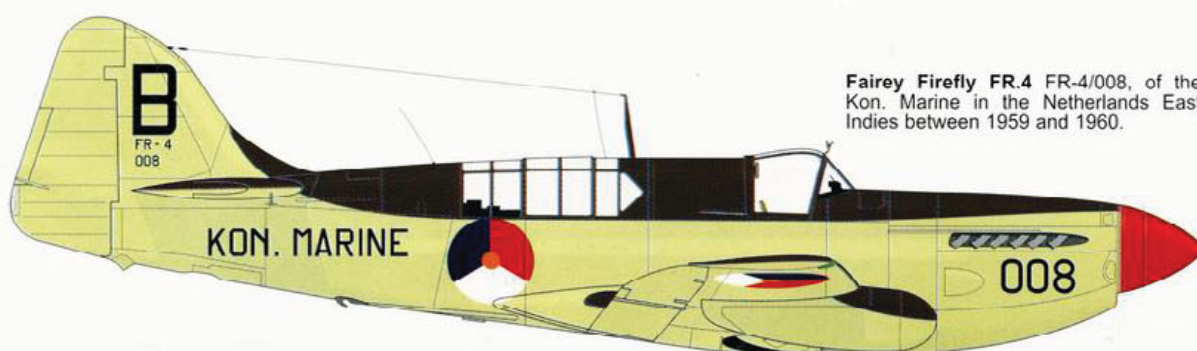
Fairey Firefly FR.5 WB416:235-T of 810 Squadron, HMS Theseus operating in Korean waters, 1951.



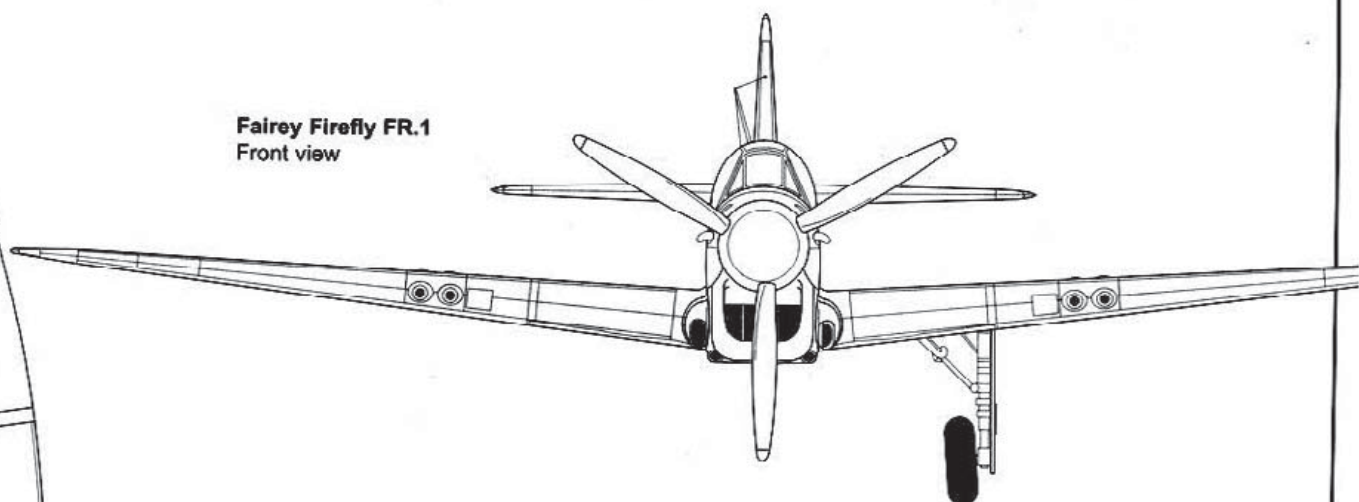
Fairey Firefly AS.6 WD892:915-NW of 723 Squadron, Royal Australian Navy, Nowra between 1954 and 1955.



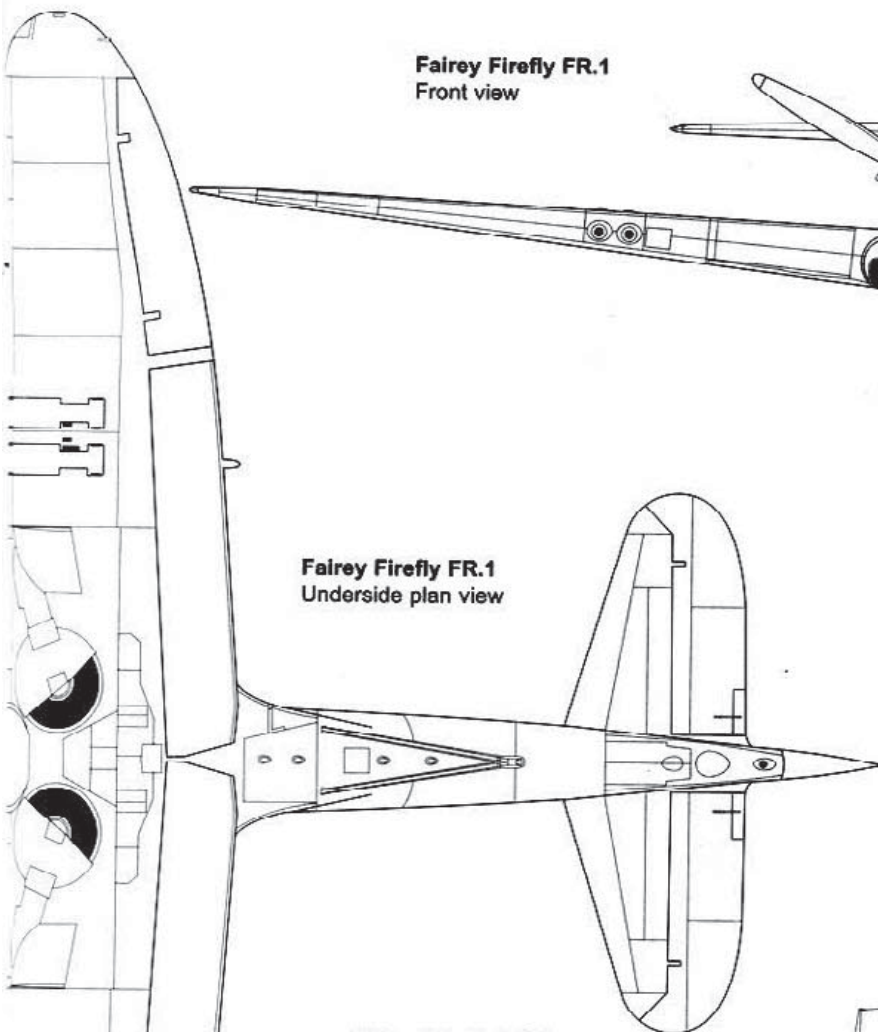
Fairey Firefly FR.4 FR-4/008, of the Kon. Marine in the Netherlands East Indies between 1959 and 1960.



Fairey Firefly FR.1
Front view



Fairey Firefly FR.1
Underside plan view



A-A



B-B



FUSELAGE CROSS SECTIONS

C-C



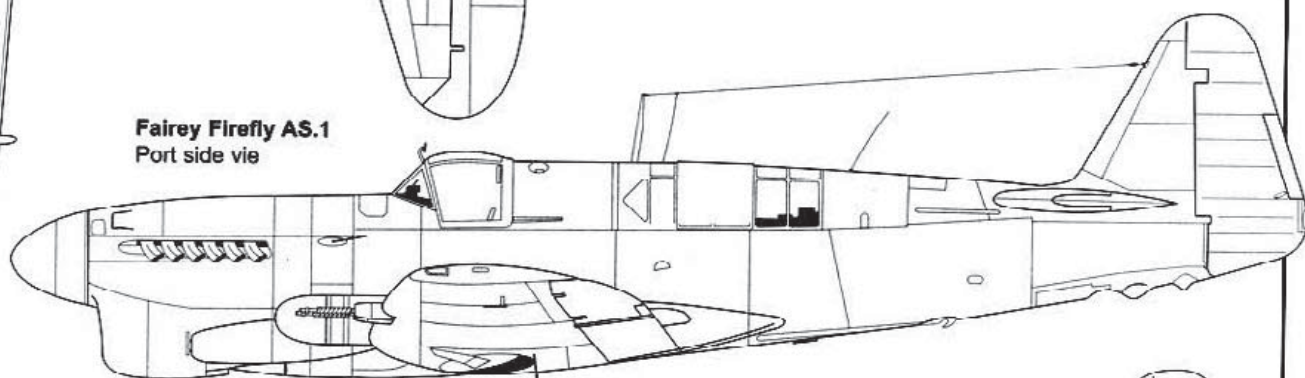
D-D



E-E

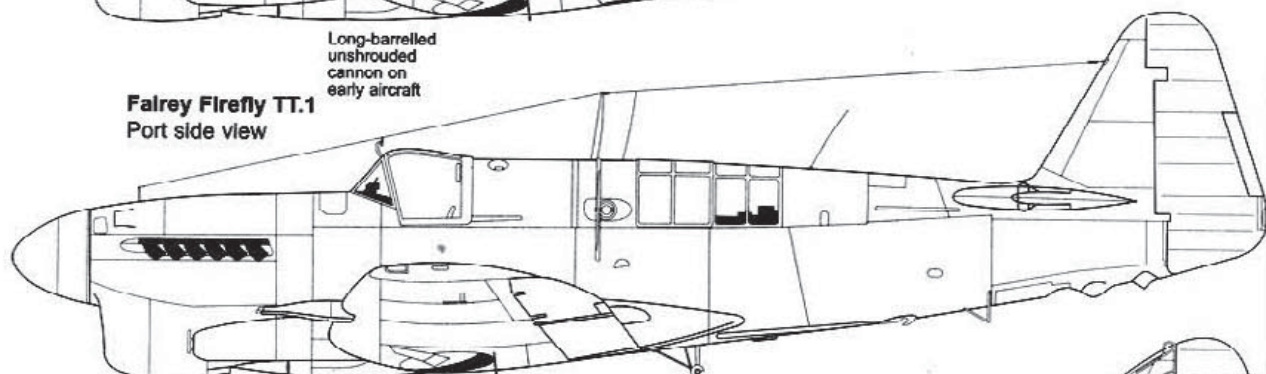


Fairey Firefly AS.1
Port side view

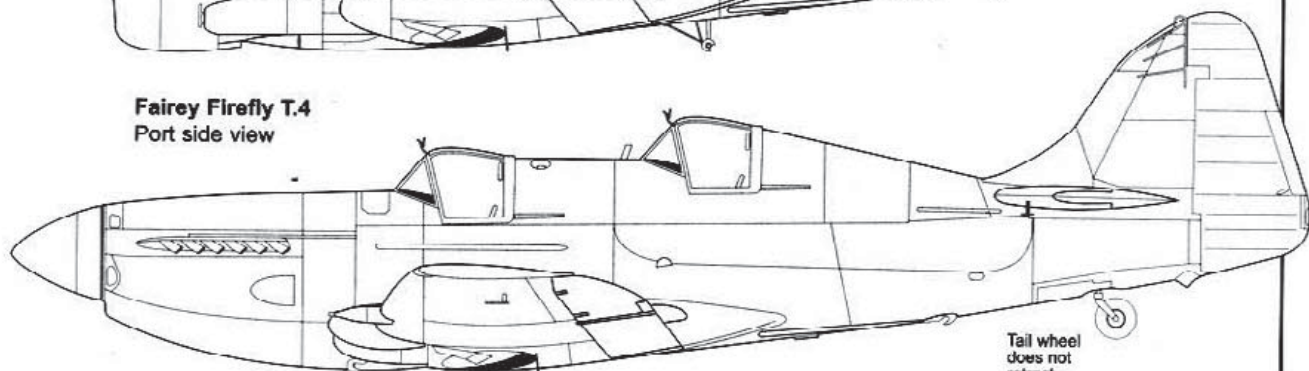


Long-barrelled
unshrouded
cannon on
early aircraft

Fairey Firefly TT.1
Port side view



Fairey Firefly T.4
Port side view



Tail wheel
does not
retract

Fairey Firefly AS.4
Front view

Four-blade
propeller on
later versions

Fairey Firefly U.8
Port side view

Fairey FIREFLY

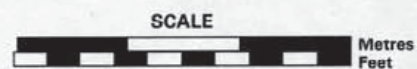
Fairey Firefly AS.1
Starboard side view

Fairey Firefly FR.4
Starboard side view

Fairey Firefly AS.6
Port side view

Drawings by
David Howle

Fairey Firefly AS.4
Upper surface plan view



Short barrelled
20mm cannon

W

W

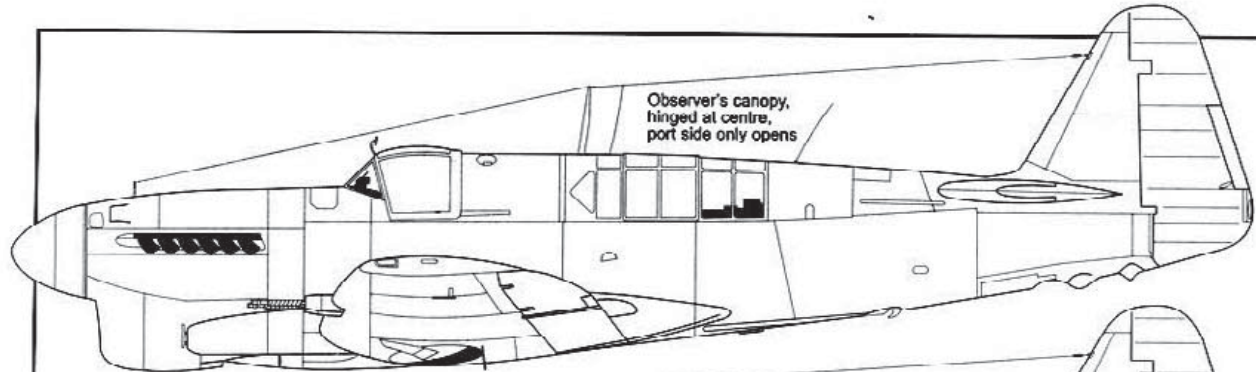


WING CROSS SECTION W-W

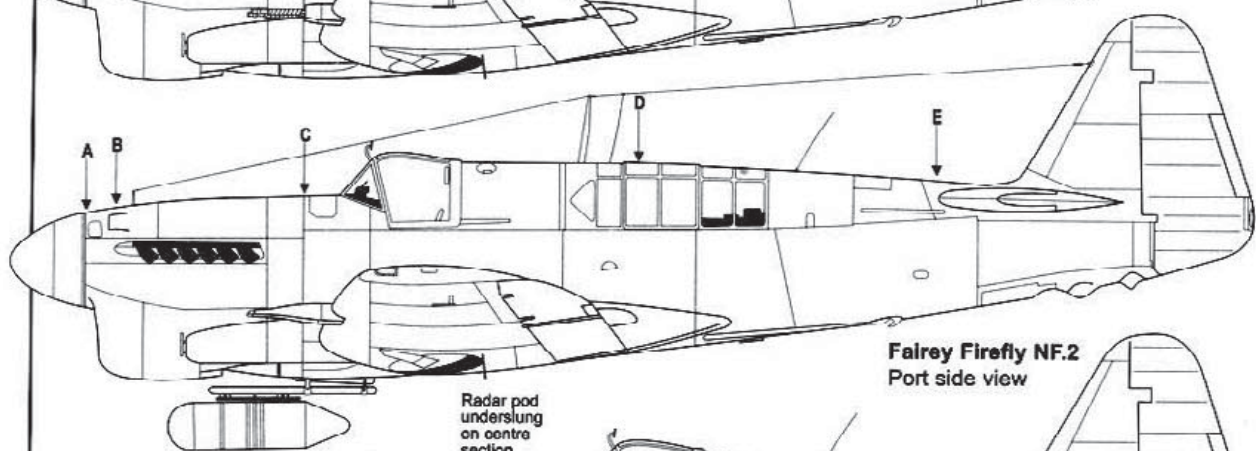
Fairey Firefly AS.4
Underside plan view

Fairey Firefly TT.4
Port side view

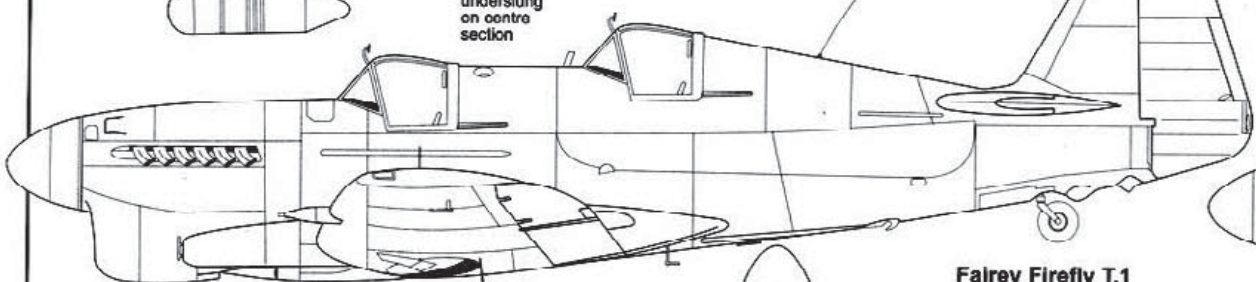
Fairey Firefly AS.7
Port side view



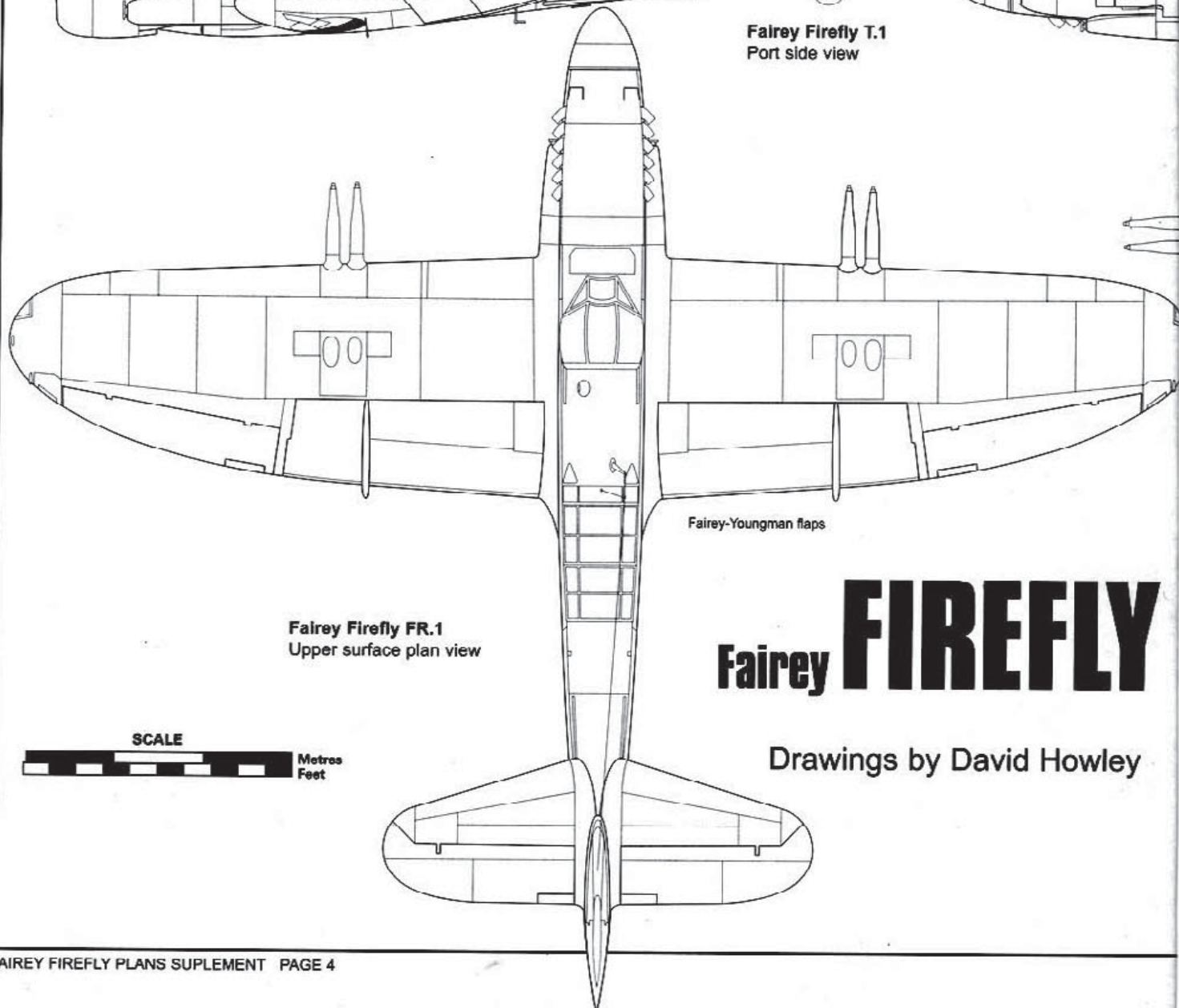
Fairey Firefly F.1
Port side view



Fairey Firefly NF.2
Port side view



Fairey Firefly T.1
Port side view



Fairey Firefly FR.1
Upper surface plan view

Fairey **FIREFLY**

Drawings by David Howley





Above: One of the first Fireflies built Z1832, was initially used for trials and had the undersurfaces painted yellow. It later entered squadron service. Left: Firefly AS.6s of 826 Squadron from HMS *Glory* in formation over Grand Harbour, Malta in December 1953. This proved to be the last operational tour of the Firefly and the squadron wintered in Malta before disbanding.

FAIREY FIREFLY SPECIFICATION

F.Mk.I, T.Mk.1, FR.Mk.4, AS.Mk.5/6, AS.Mk.7

Details of each version given in the order shown

Powerplant : Griffon IIB/XII; Griffon II; Griffon 74; Griffon 74; Griffon 59
Horsepower at take-off: 1,720/1,815 hp; 1,720 hp; 2,004 hp; 2,004 hp; 2,455 hp
At altitude: 1,495/1,645 hp; 1,495 hp; 2,245 hp; 2,245 hp; 1,965 hp

Dimensions:

Span: 44 ft 6 ins; 44 ft 6 ins; 41 ft 17 ins; 41 ft 17 ins; 44 ft 6 ins
Length: 37 ft 7 ins; 37 ft 7 ins; 37 ft 11 ins; 37 ft 11 ins; 38 ft .25 ins
Height: 13 ft 7 ins; 13 ft 7 ins; 13 ft 11 ins; 13 ft 11 ins; 13 ft 25 ins
Wing area: 328 sq ft; 328 sq ft; 330 sq ft; 330 sq ft; 342.5 sq ft

Weights:

Empty weight: 9,750 lb; 9,647 lb; 9,674 lb; 9,674 lb; 11,016 lb
Loaded weight: 14,020 lb; 14,621 lb; 15,615 lb; 16,096 lb; 13,970 lb

Performance

Max speed: 316 mph; 305 mph; 367 mph; 386 mph; 300 mph. At height: 14,000 ft; 16,500 ft; 14,000 ft; 14,000 ft; 10,750 ft
Service ceiling: 28,000 ft; 28,400 ft; 31,900 ft; 31,900 ft; 25,500 ft
Range: 774 m; 805 m; 760 m; 760 m; 860 m

Armament

F.I/FR.I: 4 x 20 mm Hispano cannon, 8 x 60 lb R.P.s or 2 x 1,000 lb bombs
FR.4: 4 x 20 mm Hispano cannon with 160 rpg, 16 x 60 lb R.P.s or 2 x 1,000 lb bombs
AS.5: 4 x 20 mm Aden cannon, 16 x 60 lb R.P.s or 2 x 1,000 lb bombs
AS.6: 16 x 60 lb R.P.s, 2 x 1,000 lb bombs
AS.7: none