



WARPAINT SERIES No. 37

Gloster **GLADIATOR**

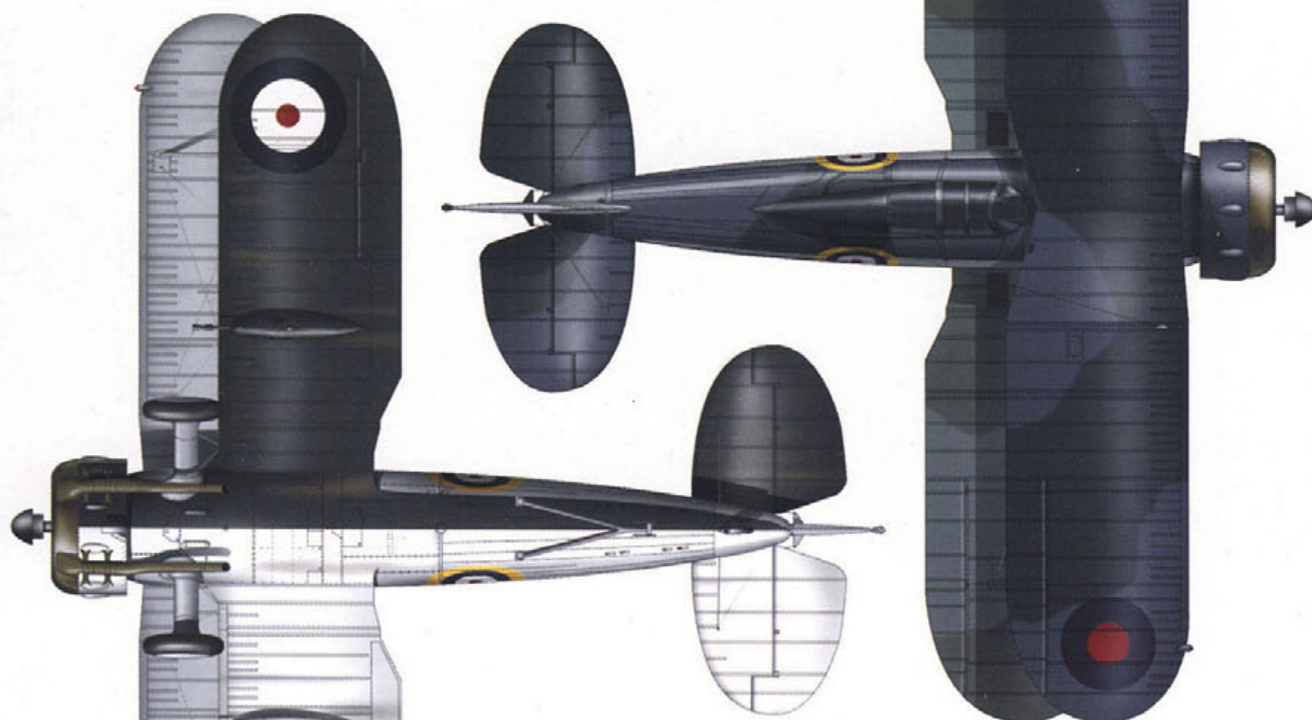
BY TOM SPENCER

The Shuttleworth Collection's Gloster Gladiator Mk. I seen on one of the various air days at which as many of the Collection's aircraft as possible are flown. The aircraft is camouflaged in early World War 2 colours and wears the codes of No. 247 Squadron. (Duncan Cubitt - Key Publishing Ltd)

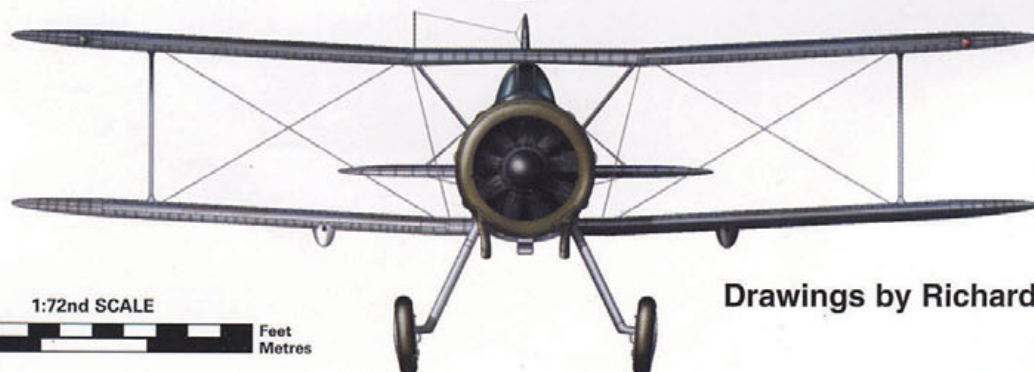




Gloster Gladiator



Gloster Sea Gladiator N5519/R, Gladiator Flight Hal Far, Malta, June 1940. Upper wings and top of fuselage in Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey; top of lower wing in Dark Sea Grey/Light Slate Grey. All other surfaces Sky Grey except undersides of lower wing, elevators and fuselage which are in Night (port) and White (starboard)



1:72nd SCALE



Drawings by Richard Caruana



By Tom Spencer

Robert J. Rudhall - Key Publishing Ltd

Gloster GLADIATOR

The biplane fighter was a completely outdated class of aircraft by the outbreak of World War 2 in September 1939, though several of the major air forces still had such obsolescent biplanes remaining in service. These included the Royal Air Force, whose last biplane fighter, the Gloster Gladiator, was the last in a long and distinguished line dating back to World War 1. It was described by some as the ultimate manifestation of its type – and of a bygone age.

With hindsight the Gladiator should not have entered service, but that it did so is a monument to conservative thinking. However, by the start of World War 2 most squadrons of Fighter Command had been re-equipped with modern Hurricanes and Spitfires. The Gladiator was, however, an

important type in the rapid expansion of the RAF during the late 1930s. Many squadrons flew them and many pilots learned their trade on the Gladiator during that period.

The Gladiator remained on the front line order of battle until 1941, though its pilots often fought against the odds and against far

superior aircraft. That the Gladiator squadrons achieved the success they did is a testament as much to its superb flying quali-

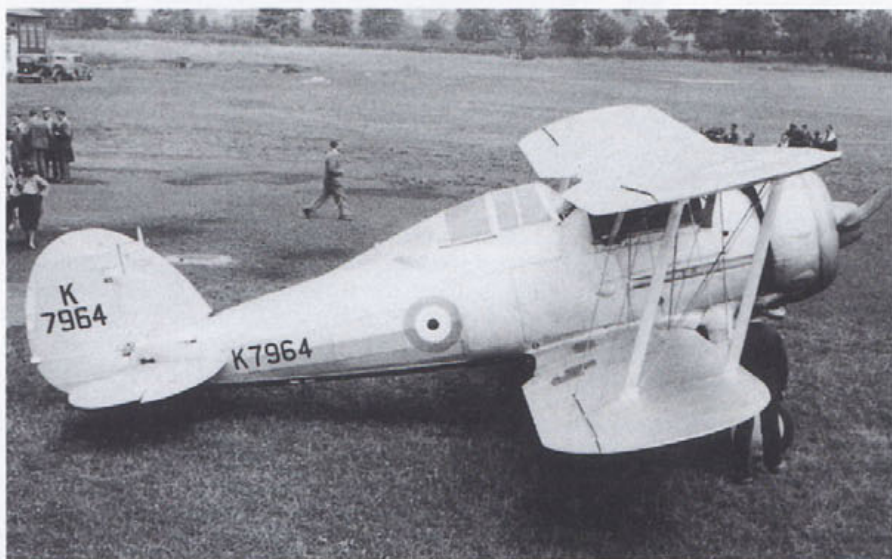
ties as to the skill of its pilots.

The Gladiator's fore runner, the Gloster SS.37 in its original form as submitted in 1934 which amongst other things, retained the open cockpit and different armament.





Above: The prototype Gladiator now serialised K5200 being flown by test pilot Gerry Sayer and carrying the Hendon 'new types' number '1'. It retains the open cockpit. Below: Gladiator I K7964 was delivered on 3 July 1937 from the second production batch but was retained by the company for various propeller and armament trials



ties as well their pilots' courage.

DEVELOPMENT

The Gladiator was a logical development from Gloster designer H. P. Folland's successful Gauntlet that had entered service in mid-1935 and become the RAF's standard fighter. Although proposals in 1933 had been made for new fighters against specification F7/30 Glosters, who were preoccupied with Gauntlet development, perceived that a development of its new fighter might provide insurance and gain some production contracts.

Thus in early 1934 the Gloster team led by H. P. Folland began construction of a prototype SS.37 that was completed for a first flight the following September by Flt Lt P. E. G. Sayer. Carrying the number G.37 it was powered by a 645 hp Mercury VIS engine, carried four machine guns, double the then standard armament, and a top speed of 242 mph was demonstrated. Further modification saw the prototype fitted with an enclosed cockpit and a more powerful

First squadron with the Gladiator was No 72 which applied a colourful red and blue marking on the fuselage and wings; K6130 nearest was the second production aircraft.

Mercury engine whilst other modern fittings included flaps on all four wings were added. The urgency of the RAF's expansion scheme then led events.

The sceptical Air Ministry sponsored an evaluation, so on 3 April 1935 the prototype was transferred to RAF charge as K5200. At the A&AEE Martlesham Heath it underwent a period of testing and evaluation and in June production plans were laid out which envisaged use of an 840 hp Mercury IX, four Vickers Mk V guns and improved discs. A new specification, F.14/35, was written specifically for the new type and contract 419392/35 for 23 aircraft, with the serial numbers K6129-K6151, was placed. On 1 July Gloster's new fighter was officially named 'Gladiator'. Testing and tooling continued apace and production was set up at the Hucclecote factory with the first aircraft of the initial production batch being delivered on 16 February 1937.

PRE-WAR USE

The first squadron to receive the Gladiator was No. 72 at Tangmere that had been newly re-formed on 22 February 1937. A nucleus for it was provided by the co-located No. 1 Squadron and in temporary command was Flt Lt E. M. Donaldson. The first four aircraft, K6130-K6134, were collected from the Gloster factory at Brockworth and the remainder were soon delivered. No. 72 continued to work up after its move in June to Church Fenton in Yorkshire where Sqn Ldr E. J. L. Hope arrived as CO. Although his flight commanders were experienced, Hope's pilots were mainly new and on short service commissions coming to No. 72 straight from flying training.

With further deliveries from the first production batch the next unit to re-equip was No. 3 Squadron at Kenley under Sqn Ldr H. L. P. Lister beginning on 2 April. Their first

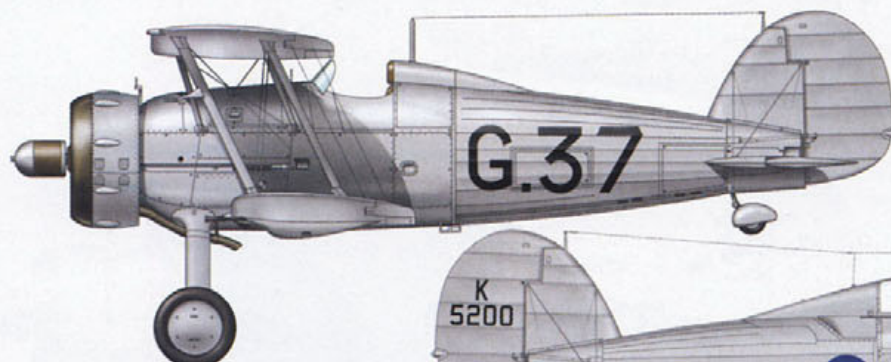


Gloster Gladiator camouflage and markings

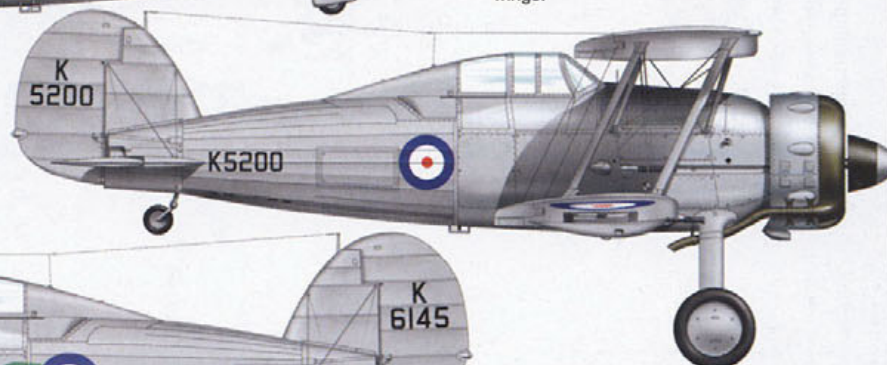
Drawings by Richard J. Caruana

GLOSTER GLADIATOR COLOUR KEY

Aluminium	White	Night/Black	Ident Blue (Bright)	Ident Red (Bright)	Dark Earth	Light Earth	Dark Green	Light Green	Sky Grey	Sky	Extra Dark Sea Grey	Ocean Grey
Medium Sea Grey	Dark Slate Grey	Light Slate Grey	Ident Blue (Dull)	Ident Red (Dull)	Ident Yellow	Light Green (Ireland)	Ident Orange (Ireland)	Ident Green (Ireland)	Dark Green (Finland)	Black (Finland)	Light Blue (Finland)	RLM 02

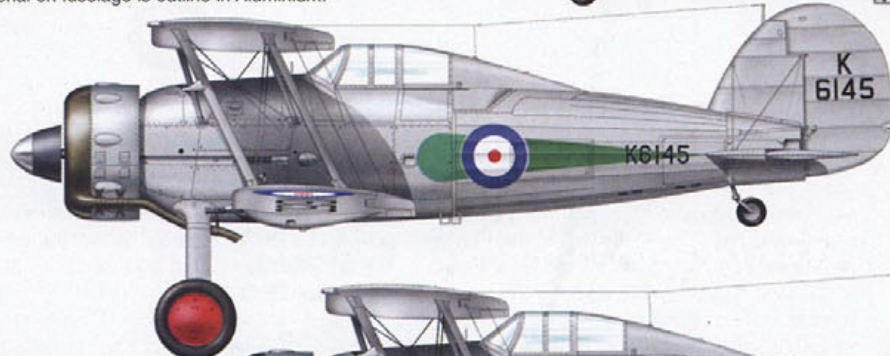


Left: Gloster Gladiator prototype, G.37. Standard 'silver' scheme of Aluminium dope over all fabric areas, adonised aluminium metal panels.

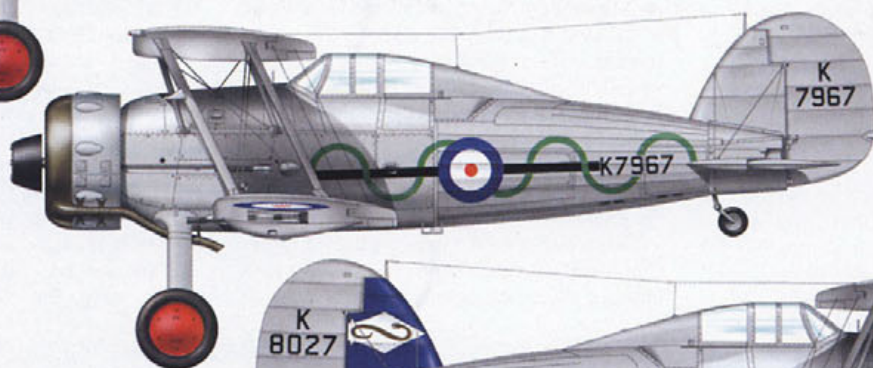


Below: Gloster Gladiator prototype, K5200, brought up to production standard. Standard 'silver' scheme. Roundels in six positions; serial repeated under lower wings.

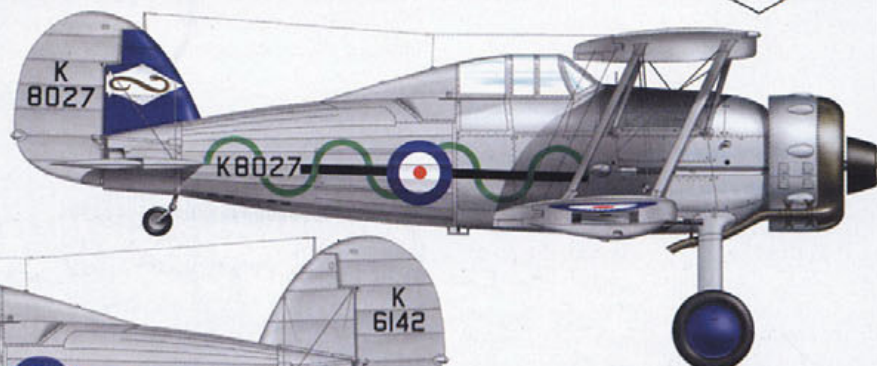
Below: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K6145, of N° 3 (F) Squadron, Kenley, 1937. Standard 'silver' scheme. Green markings on fuselage and upper wings; serial on fuselage is outline in Aluminium.



Below: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K8027, of N° 87 Squadron, Debden, October 1937. Similar colours to K7967. 'B' Flight commander's aircraft with blue fin and wheel discs, together with unit marking within a 'spearhead' on the fin.

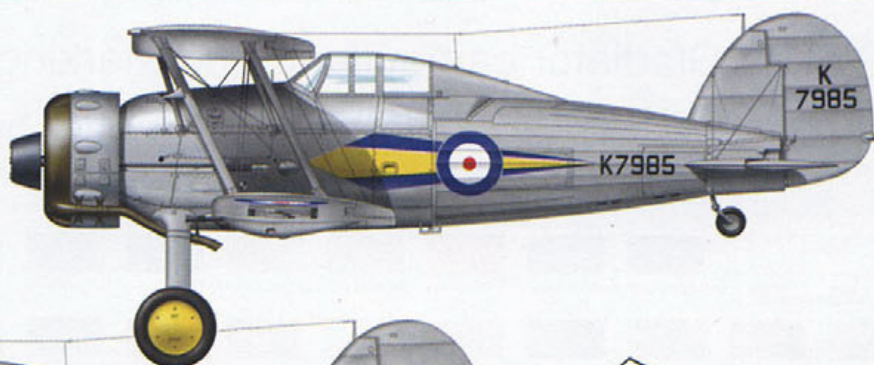


Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K7967, 'A' Flight, N° 87 (F) Squadron, Debden, October 1937. Standard 'silver' scheme. Black/Green motif along fuselage sides; red wheel covers.



Left: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K6142, of N° 72 Squadron, Church Fenton, 1937. Standard 'silver' scheme. Blue/Red markings on fuselage and upper wings. Serial repeated in black under wings. Red wheel hubs.

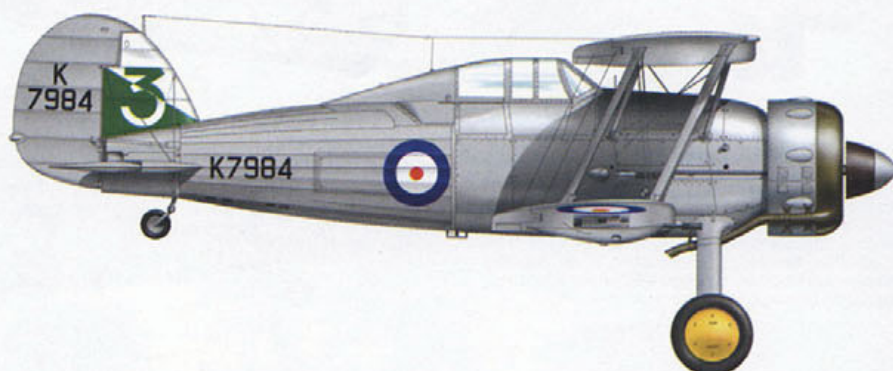
Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K7985, N° 73 Squadron (B Flight), Digby, 1937.**
Standard 'silver' scheme. Blue and Yellow markings on fuselage and upper wings. Yellow wheel covers.



Below: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, L7612, N° 33 Squadron, Ismailia, May 1938.**
Standard 'silver' scheme. Red wheel centres; unit crest within spearhead on both sides of fin.



Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K7984:3, N° 3 (F) Squadron, 1938 Air Defence Exercises.** Standard 'silver' scheme. White and green fin with yellow wheel discs.



aircraft was K6145 that had the CO at the controls when its engine cut on takeoff from Brockworth necessitating a hasty cross wind landing. No. 3's time with the Gladiator should have been brief as it was re-equipped with Hurricanes the following March. However, their home at Kenley was deemed too small for the fast monoplanes, so in July it had to revert to Gladiators that were retained until after moving to Biggin Hill in mid-1939.

A second production batch of 186 aircraft followed immediately and these were delivered to several squadrons, including No. 80 at Debden. However, this unit soon moved to Egypt where they later became the leading exponents of the Gladiator in combat.

The first Gladiators for Sqn Ldr C. A. Bouchier's No. 54 Squadron at Hornchurch arrived on 27 April and their neighbours were another distinguished squadron, No. 65 under Sqn Ldr C. F. H. Grace, who collected their aircraft direct from the factory on 14 May 1937. The more modern features of the new fighter were not, however, welcomed by everyone. No. 65's CO reportedly flew back to Hornchurch with the hood open and refused to land with the flaps! This squadron was typical of the time and its aircraft wore colourful squadron markings and training concentrated on 'set piece' fighter attacks and formation flying. Like some other squadrons, No. 65 formed an aerobatic team

No. 72 Squadron removed its markings for an exercise later in 1937 when it was detached to RAE Farnborough.

to demonstrate the skills of the RAF at various air shows that proved so popular.

Next was one of the new 'expansion' squadrons, No. 73 which used some Furies as interim equipment and which by the end of the year was settled at Digby. Also newly formed and replacing its temporary Fury IIs was Debden based No. 87 Squadron who's first Gladiators also arrived in June.

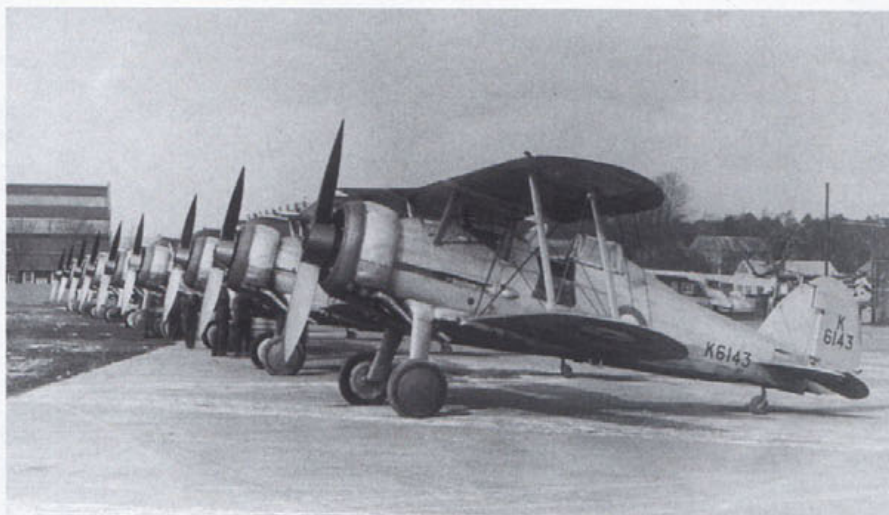
Finally, 10 July saw the delivery of K7982 to the famous No. 56 Squadron at North Weald and it too was equipped by the end of the month.

This completed the initial Fighter Command re-equipment, so an effort to improve the defences of the Suez Canal, in

February 1938 No. 33 Squadron at Ismailia in Egypt was re-equipped. Formerly a bomber squadron with Harts it underwent a period of fighter training, being joined by No. 80 Squadron that in May had been posted out from England.

Mid-1938 also saw No. 85 Squadron, reformed at Debden in June, issued with some Gladiators pending the arrival of its Hurricanes. Gladiators also became the temporary equipment for No. 25 Squadron at Hawkinge when in June they replaced their 'interim' Demons pending the arrival of Blenheim IIs at the end of the year.

Although the mid to late 1930s were in many ways the heyday for colourful



squadron markings, some units did not wear their traditional garb on their new aircraft. No. 54 restricted itself to fins coloured in the squadron colours, whilst No. 56's famous red and white checks were not worn either. No. 56 identified itself only with its badge within a white arrowhead on the fin. Most squadrons carried these, including Nos. 33, and 80 in Egypt, though the 'new' squadrons, 72, 73 and 87 – all decorated the fuselage and wings of their aircraft with colourful markings.

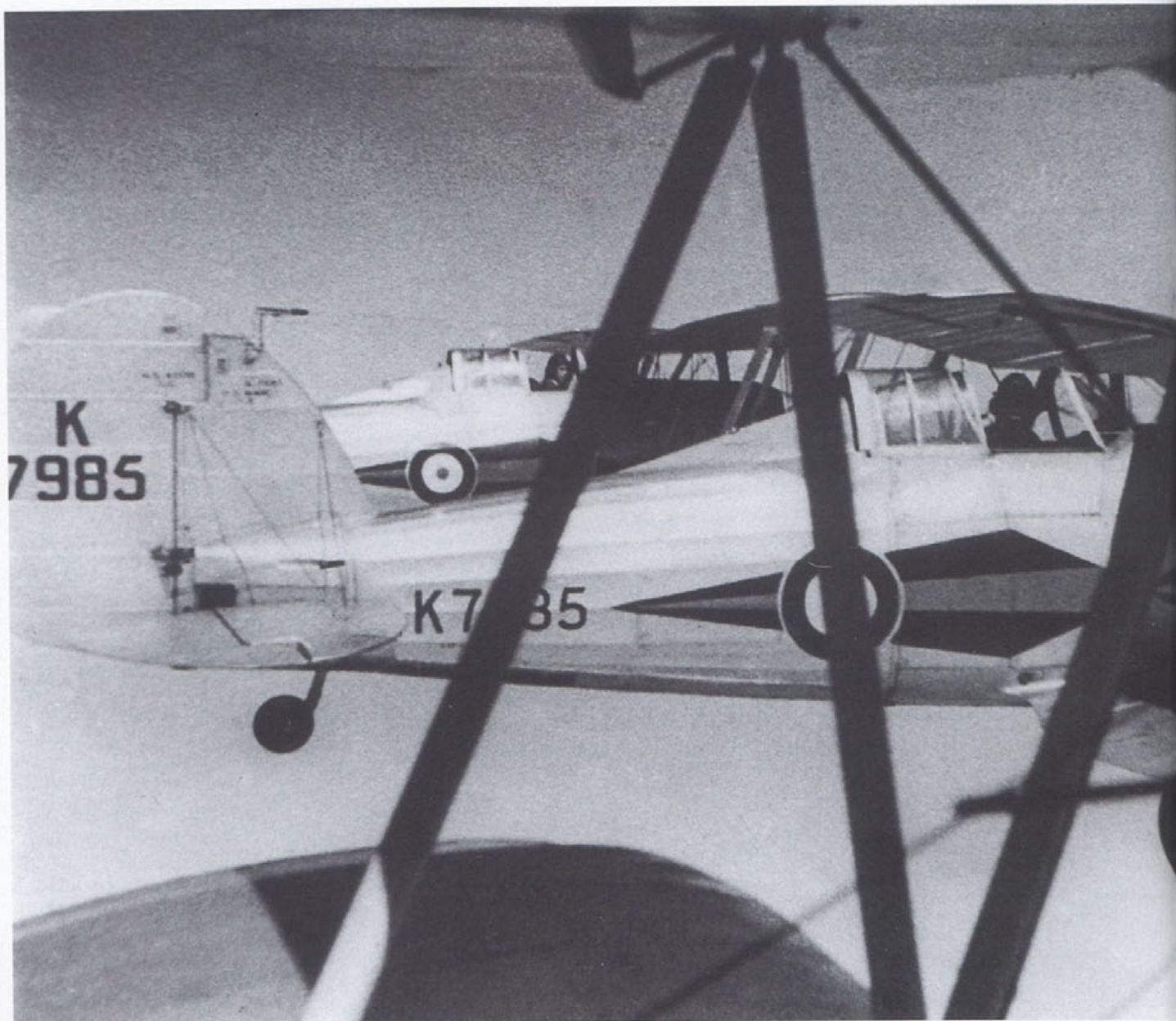
The Gladiator's time in the front line with Fighter Command was relatively brief. After No. 3's brief flirtation with Hurricanes, No. 56 was the first to re-equip with Hurricanes in May 1938, quickly followed by Nos. 73 and 87 Squadrons in July and No. 85 in September. Thus, at the time of the Munich Crisis in September, Gladiators equipped just five squadrons, though No. 25 was about to receive its Blenheims. These units went onto a war footing as a conflict with Germany loomed. Aircraft were camouflaged and markings toned down. Eventually, to replace the colourful squadron markings, two-letter unit identity codes ('Squadron Codes') were worn. These Codes were: 'OP' for No. 3 Squadron, 'RX' for 25, 'DL' for 54, 'FZ' for 65 and 'RN' for No. 72 Squadron. The Crisis passed, but a new urgency was placed on training and receipt of more modern equipment with which to face the might of the Luftwaffe. The following spring, to the evident relief of their pilots, these last three squadrons all re-equipped with Spitfire Is whilst No. 3, having moved from Kenley, finally re-equipped with Hurricanes once more in July 1939.

As the Regular squadrons were re-equipped so Gladiators were passed to some of the squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force starting with No. 607 (County of Durham)



Above: The second squadron to form was No. 65 which presented this impressive lineup at RAF Hornchurch for inspection in 1937. Below: The leading aircraft of this trio from B Flight, No. 72 Squadron, K6140, wears a blue fin to denote the aircraft of the Flight Commander.





Squadron. It's first, K6147, was delivered on 12 December 1938; it later became the only Auxiliary unit to claim a confirmed kill with the type. No. 605 'County of Warwick' Squadron in February 1939 was next, soon followed by Nos. 603 (City of Edinburgh) and 615 (County of Surrey) Squadrons and like the other Auxiliary fighter units were to play a key role in the defence of Britain during 1940.

INTO ACTIVE SERVICE

Overseas, however, where probable opposition was likely to be less modern, new squadrons continued to form with the Gladiator with No. 112 forming in Egypt in mid-1939 whilst in Aden in March, No. 94 began forming at Khormaksar for the defence of the vital port and the Red Sea approaches.

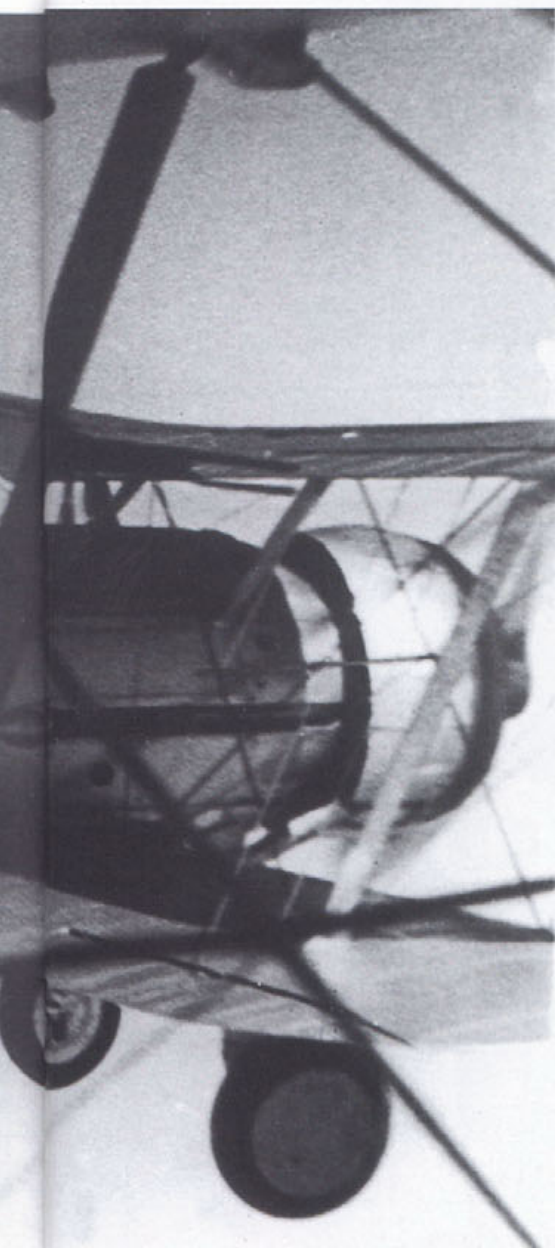
Another newly formed squadron was No. 73 to which K7985 belonged and which carries their newly designed distinctive blue and yellow markings

The Gladiator first fired its guns in action with the RAF during the inter-factional fighting between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine. The Egyptian-based squadrons, Nos. 33 and 80, each sent detachments to assist in the peacekeeping campaign and usually operated from Ramleh. The Gladiators were often in action against the dissidents, strafing attacks being made from low level. A typical action by No. 33 Squadron was on 10 November 1938 when five Gladiators made attacks during a cordon operation at Beit Fulk. One aircraft crashed after being hit by sniper fire and although the injured pilot was rescued, he later died. During these operations between September and December, No. 33 flew over 1,800 hours but lost three aircraft and two pilots.

No. 80 Squadron was to see comparable amounts of action and also suffered some losses, K7909 being abandoned after a force landing on 12 September, for example.

Gladiator K7920 shows the markings of No. 54 Squadron which were restricted to the fin only.





After seeing a considerable amount of policing action, both squadrons eventually returned to Egypt

No 65's CO decided to carry the unit's red chevron badge diagonally down the fin, though whether they were worn on the wing is unknown.

DEFENDING BRITAIN

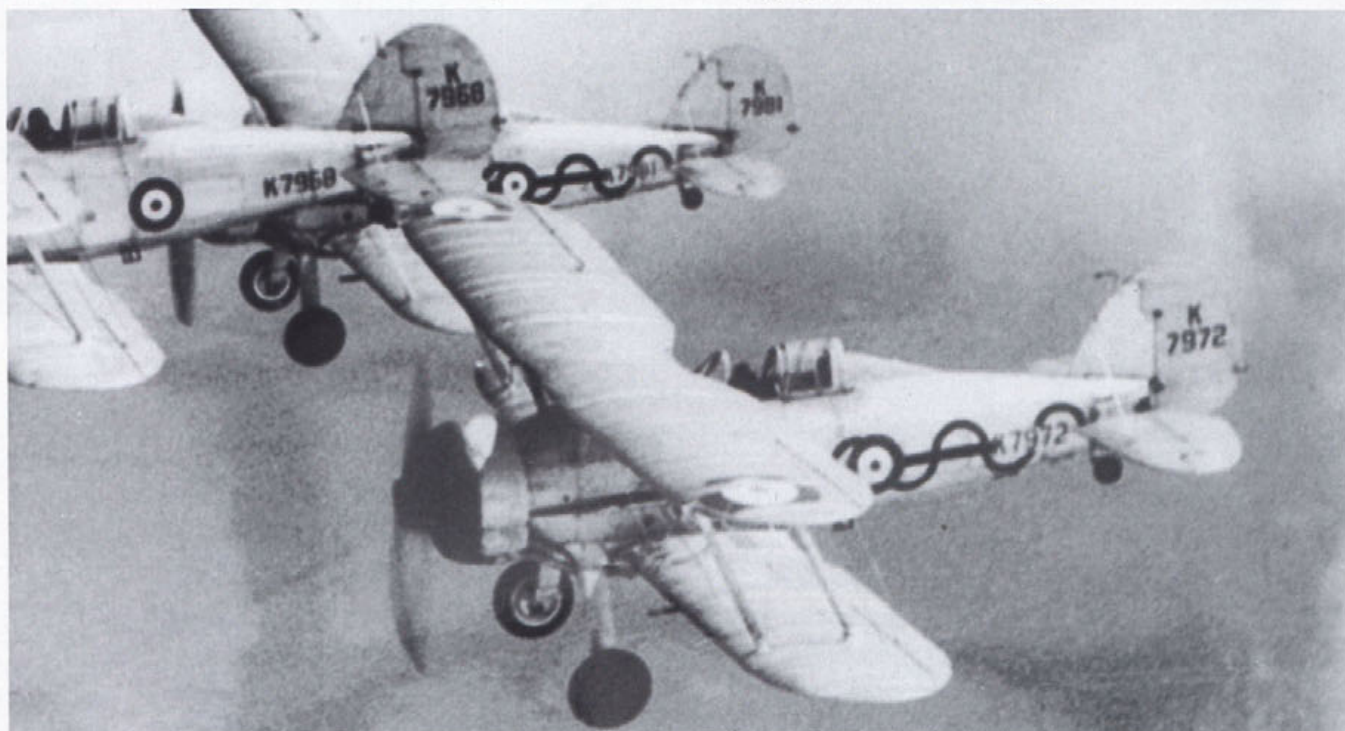
Following the outbreak of war against Germany in September 1939 the Luftwaffe began occasional reconnaissance patrols off the north east coast of Britain, mainly to locate the major units of the Royal Navy. Fighter Command therefore ordered fighter patrols, the first by Gladiators being flown from Turnhouse by No. 603 Squadron on 5 September. It was uneventful. The squadron began re-equipping with Spitfires soon afterwards, though other new squadrons were forming. Amongst them was No. 263 at Filton on 2 October under Sqn Ldr J. W. Donaldson and No. 152 at Acklington on the previous day. No. 607 Squadron soon moved to Acklington alongside them and on the morning of the 17th opened the Gladiator's account against the Luftwaffe. Three aircraft led by Flt Lt Sample in K7995:AF-O were scrambled over the North Sea after a 'plot' and in broken cloud eventually found a Dornier Do 18 flying boat of

2/KuFIgr 606. Attacking in turn the Gladiators repeatedly hit the Dornier and it limped away to ditch shortly afterwards.

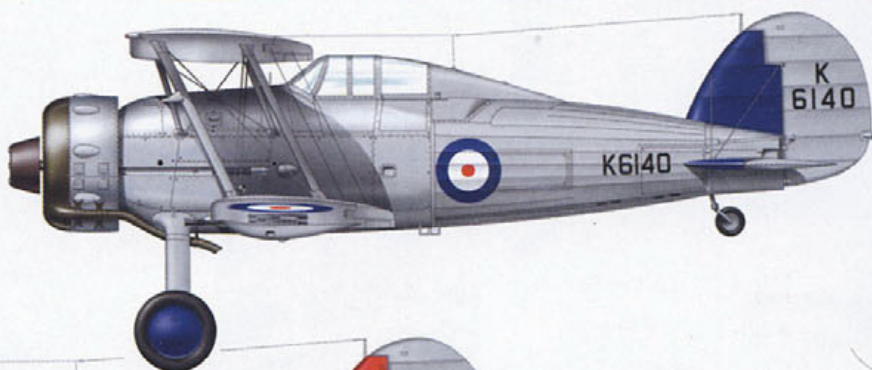
No. 152 Squadron eventually found action on 29 January 1940 when a He 111 was shot down over Druridge Bay and its next victory came on 27 February when Blue Section patrolled Farne Island brought down another. These patrols were not without loss as the squadron lost its own CO who went missing over the sea.

The Luftwaffe's interest in the Fleet anchorage at Scapa Flow in Orkney led to fighter units being formed in the northern isles. For the defence of Shetland, No. 152's 'B' Flight moved to Sumburgh but in mid December was re-named 'Fighter Flight Shetland'. The Flight had occasional combats and on 18 April over the sea Fg Off Gillen caught a Ju 88. He hit one of the

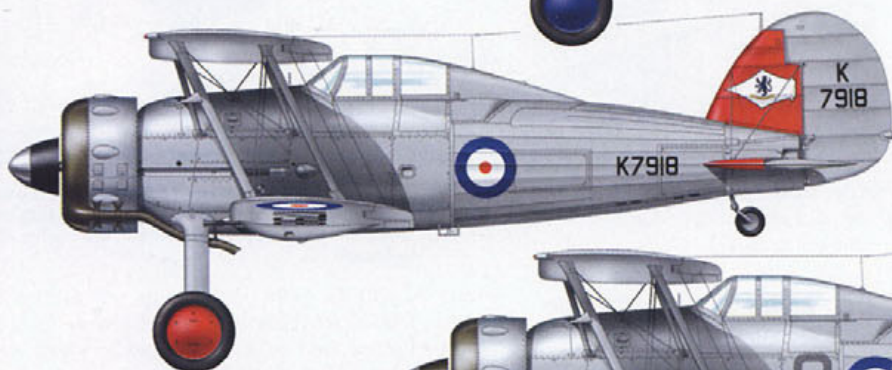
After a brief period with interim equipment, the newly formed No. 87 Squadron also received Gladiators, though its markings were restricted to the fuselage.



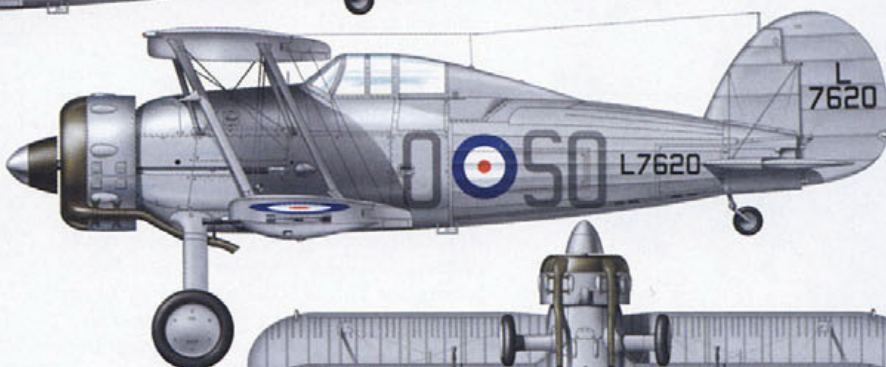
Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I**, K6140, 'C' Flight, N° 72 (F) Squadron. Standard 'silver' scheme, with blue fin, wheel covers and tailplane.



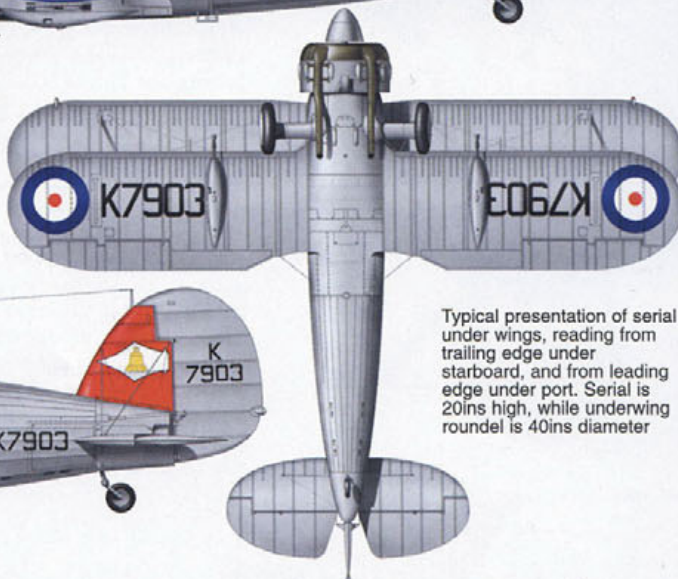
Below: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I**, K7918, 'A' Flight, N° 54 (F) Squadron. Standard 'silver' scheme. Red fin, tailplane and wheel covers; polished spinner front.



Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I**, L7620:SO-O, N° 33 Squadron, 1939. Standard 'silver' scheme. Gray code letters on fuselage



Below: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I**, K7903, N° 80 Squadron, Egypt, March 1940. Standard 'silver' scheme. Flight colour (red) on fin and wheel discs. Note white outline to 'spearhead' marking on fin



Typical presentation of serial under wings, reading from trailing edge under starboard, and from leading edge under port. Serial is 20ins high, while underwing roundel is 40ins diameter



Upper wing markings for Gloster Gladiators of N° 3 Squadron (top), N° 72 Squadron (centre) and N° 73 Squadron (bottom). Roundels were 40ins in diameter





engines and it descended towards the sea - a probable. The Flight had another combat on 5 June when a Do 17 was found north of Lerwick at 7,000 ft and after several bursts it dived into the sea and was this time confirmed.

Later the Flight moved to Roborough for the defence of Plymouth and on 1 August it became No. 247 Squadron - the only Gladiator squadron with Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. Luckily it saw little action but on the evening 6 November Plt Off Winter damaged an He 111 off Falmouth. This was in the last combat of home-based Gladiators and soon afterwards the squadron re-equipped with Hurricanes and the Gladiator was relegated to second

line duties in the UK.

BLITZKRIEG

In mid-November 1939 Nos. 607 and 615 Squadrons joined to form No. 60 Wing which was an element of the Air Component of the British Expeditionary Force then moving to France. Based in the mud at Vitry en Artois the Gladiators of the two squadrons flew regular patrols through the bitter winter, but (perhaps fortunately) they only had one contact with the Luftwaffe. On 29 December Flt Lt Sanders in N2308:KW-T found an He 111 of WeKuSta 26 and although he fired off almost all of his ammunition; the RAF's final combat for 1939

The Gladiator Mk.IIs of No. 3 Squadron, with K6147 nearest, were well represented at a display for VIPs in 1937. The squadron markings were green.

resulted in only a 'damaged'.

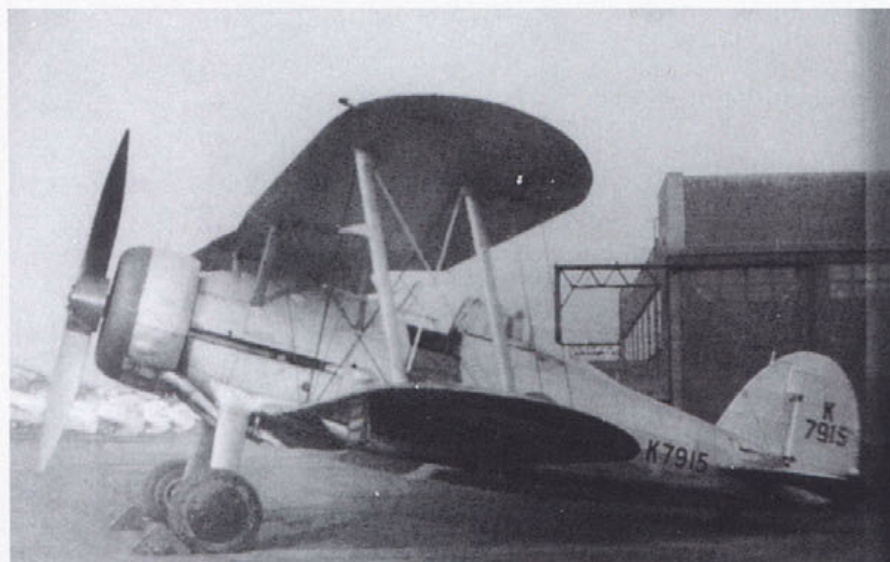
During the spring both squadrons had converted to Hurricanes and were heavily engaged when the German offensive opened on 10 May. RAF Gladiators may have seen a few combats, but most surviving aircraft were evacuated to England where they were issued to other units. One was 'G' Flight which was formed at Manston and existed between 23-30 May under Flt Lt Sanders during the Dunkirk evacuation. When this ad hoc Flight was disbanded its aircraft passed on to other units. Other 'evacuees' found their way in small numbers to various units. No. 16 Squadron, a Lysander-equipped army co-operation squadron, had one which had been brought out of France. Most, however, were relegated to second line tasks as related later.

NORWAY

In late 1939 No. 263 Squadron had 22 Gladiator IIs and received stores and transport as a 'mobile' squadron, intended to reinforce Finland. However, the plan lapsed with the end of the 'Winter War'. The German invasion of Scandinavia, however, resulted in frantic efforts to support the Norwegians.

Having been equipped for mobile operations, No. 263 Squadron was therefore ordered to move and provide fighter cover to

Newly formed in 1937 at Debden, No 80 Squadron, where K7915 was seen, moved to the Middle East the following year.



Gloster Gladiator production list

Royal Air Force

Mark	Number	Serials	Manufacturer	Remarks
Prototype	1	K5200	Gloster Aircraft	
I	23	K6129-K6151	Gloster Aircraft	Lewis guns in underwing pods
I	180	K7892-K8055		
		L7608-L7623	Gloster Aircraft	K7892-K7928 and with underwing Lewis guns. K7929-K7938 with Vickers K guns
I	28	L8005-L8032	Gloster Aircraft	
II	12	N2303-N2314	Gloster Aircraft	Batch of 50, 38 of which built as Sea Gladiator (Interim)
II	240	N5575-N5594		
		N5620-N5649		
		N5680-N5729		
		N5750-N5789		
		N5810-N5859		
		N5875-N5924	Gloster Aircraft	

Royal Navy (Sea Gladiator)

Interim	38	N2265-N2302	Gloster Aircraft	Interim standard with arrestor hooks
II	60	N5500-N5549		
		N5565-N5574	Gloster Aircraft	Full standard with arrestor hooks and dinghy stowage. Some later used by RAF

Exports

LATVIA				
I	26	114-126 163-175	Gloster Aircraft	Fitted with Vickers 7.7mm VM guns. Delivered Aug-Nov 37
LITHUANIA				
I	14	G-704-G-717	Gloster Aircraft	Fitted with Vickers 7.7mm VM guns. Delivered Oct-Nov 37
NORWAY				
I	6	413,415,417, 419, 421, 423	Gloster Aircraft	Later modified to Mk II standards. Delivered late 1937
II	6	425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435	Gloster Aircraft	Fitted with .303 in Colt guns. Diverted from RAF contract (N5919-N5924) and delivered in 1939
SWEDEN				
I	37	231-267	Gloster Aircraft	Designated J-8 by Swedish Air Force
II	18	268-285	Gloster Aircraft	Designated J-8A by Swedish Air Force
BELGIUM				
I	22	G-15 to G-38	Gloster Aircraft (G15-G30) SABCA (G31-G38)	Fitted with Vickers Mk V guns. Delivered Sep 37-Mar 38.
CHINA				
I	36	01-36	Gloster Aircraft	Fitted with Vickers Mk V guns. Delivered by sea via Hong Kong in late 1937
EIRE				
I	4	23-26	Gloster Aircraft	Delivered during 1938
GREECE				
I	2	Delta Epsilon 1-2	Gloster Aircraft	Purchased privately and donated to RHAF. Delivered during 1938
PORTUGAL				
I	15	450- 464	Gloster Aircraft	Delivered September 1938. Diverted from RAF contracts
IRAQ				
I	15	80-94	Gloster Aircraft	Delivered during December 19 37-March 19 38. Diverted from RAF contracts.

TOTAL PRODUCTION:

Prototype:	1
Gladiator Mk I:	378
Gladiator Mk II:	270
Sea Gladiator (Interim):	38
Sea Gladiator II:	60
Total	747

Continued on page 12

the Allied forces in central Norway around Namsos. The ground party left for Scotland and embarkation to Norway (though in fact they never arrived) and on 20 April the CO led 18 Gladiators to Orkney where they embarked in *HMS Glorious* which sailed on the 22nd. No. 263 Squadron arrived on the frozen Lake Lesjaskog on the afternoon of the 24th having been led by Skuas from 800 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm. Preparations were

minimal and the organisation very poor with few facilities or ground crew.

However, by the following morning No. 263 had two aircraft armed and operational, though an attack by a He 111 soon afterwards destroyed four aircraft beginning a torrid day. Another raid by He 111s, Ju 88s and Bf 110s, destroyed another four Gladiators and the Skuas but the pair that was ready took off to provide cover. About

and hour later another six launched and covered the front line for two hours. During his patrol Flt Lt Mills attacked a formation of He 111s and claimed one destroyed. A later patrol encountered a raid of 12 He 111s and six Ju 88s and N5579 hit a Heinkel which crash landed on the lake and burnt out. Another raid on Lake Lesjaskog destroyed four more Gladiators making the squadron's position untenable. Eventually a further two

Gladiators (N5633 flown by the CO and Mills probably in N5641) got airborne and in the following couple of hours had a series of combats over the lake forcing one Heinkel down and driving others off.

On landing the order to withdraw to Aandalsnes, 60 miles away, was given. From there the five survivors flew into the evening during which the CO claimed a He 111 shot down. After a few more sorties the following day, the surviving aircraft were destroyed and the gallant squadron evacuated. After their return to England the CO received a DSO for his leadership.

Thereafter No. 263 Squadron re-equipped with more Gladiators to support the Anglo-French expedition at Narvik in northern Norway. Bardufoss airfield was prepared for them with the ground party arriving on 11 May. The following day the Gladiators flew onto *HMS Furious* and sailed in company with *Glorious* (which carried No. 46 Squadron's Hurricanes) on 14 May. *Furious* arrived off Norway on 21 May but on the transit to Bardufoss, in dreadful weather, two Gladiators crashed into a mountainside. One pilot was killed and the other injured. The rest of the squadron later flew off in better weather and arrived safely at Bardufoss. But because of the desperate situation in France plans were already being drawn for an early evacuation.

No. 263 began operations on 22 May flying over 30 sorties though N5698 either shot down or collided with an He 111 but both were lost. The following afternoon N5719 had a combat with a Bf 110 off Harstad which was later confirmed destroyed, but it was then abandoned due to fuel shortage.

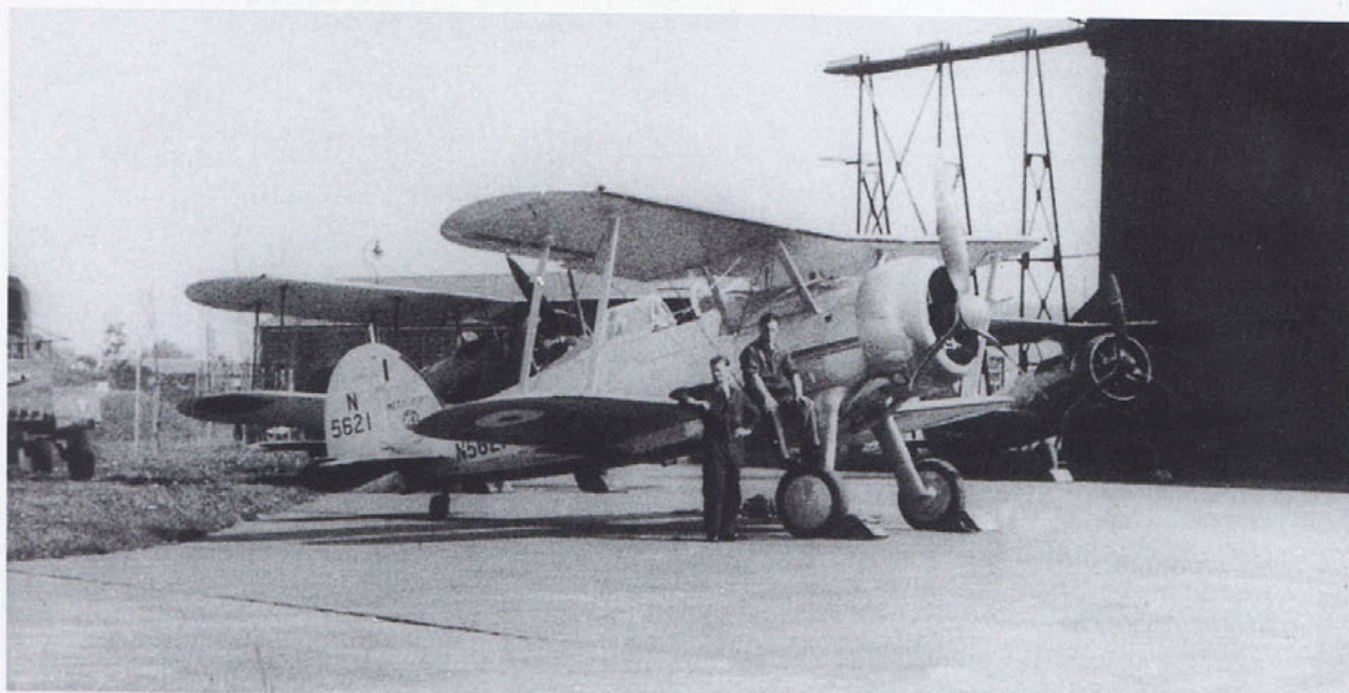
Further successes came to the squadron, on the 25th an early patrol found an Fw 200 which after two bursts went into the sea. Later in the day the same pilot engaged a Ju 90 in a series of attacks which sent it down onto Finoy Island. Late in the evening a third of these large aircraft was found by two more Gladiators which brought it down off Sorreissa. To destroy three such large aircraft in one day was a significant achieve-



Above: Possibly because they were seen as interim equipment, No. 56 Squadron did not apply its famous red and white checks on its Gladiators which merely carried the badge on the fin. Below: The first RAF squadron overseas to receive Gladiators was No. 33 in Egypt to which the unmarked K8036 belonged. Hart K4469 of No. 6 Squadron is behind.



Below: Not only fighter squadrons received the Gladiator, for this Mk II, N5621 was delivered to the Mildenhall Meteorological Flight in 1938



ment. Further combats then occurred on subsequent days with some pilots building considerable scores - Flt Lt Williams for example claiming one and five shared victories.

Other Gladiators were detached to Bodo where they too found some success before being withdrawn in the face of the advancing enemy. No. 263's Gladiators continued to have further encounters, destroying a He 111 of KG 26 on 28 May. A subsequent lull then allowed some ground attack sorties in support of the Army to be flown.

However, the order to evacuate Norway came on 2 June and led to increased Luftwaffe activity and to two remarkable combats by No. 263's pilots. In the early afternoon two Gladiators patrolling near the Swedish border came across two Bf 110s, one of the biplanes soon fell but Plt Off Jacobson sighted further enemy aircraft which he promptly attacked. One He 111 was hit and fell before Jacobson was attacked by other Heinkels and Bf 110s. He fired on them all, though his aircraft too was hit. He fired off his last ammunition at a He 111 in front of him and with its engines on fire it glided down whilst Jacobson limped back to base. This remarkable combat saw

him credited with four destroyed - and an immediate award of the DFC.

Later, another patrol met 12 He 111s near Narvik and in a series of combats three were claimed as was a Ju 87R of 2/StG 1 which crashed into a hill. The pilots were credited with three He 111s and a Ju 87 shared destroyed.

The squadron then continued operations until embarking on *HMS Glorious* in the early hours of 8 June. No 263's Gladiators had fought 72 combats and claimed at least 26 victories, with only two losses. It was a tragic irony that later that day *Glorious* and her escorts were sunk by the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* with the loss of 1,519 lives, including the whole of No. 263 Squadron.

ASCENDANCY IN THE DESERT

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Egyptian-based Gladiator squadrons continued training and patrolling the Libyan frontier, sending detachments to forward strips in the desert. When Italy declared war on 10 June 1940, the RAF's three Gladiator squadrons - No. 33 at Mersa

Matruh, 80 at Amriya and 112 at Helwan were ready and No. 33 Squadron conducted the first war patrols on the 11th. In order to be closer to the front line, on the 13th it moved six aircraft to Sidi Barrani. The next morning three aircraft flew an offensive patrol as far as Bardia during which Fg Off Dean in L9046 shot down a Fiat CR. 32 of 8 Gruppo to claim the first victory of the desert war. His two wingmen flying N5783 and N5768 also shot down a Cant 310 light bomber.

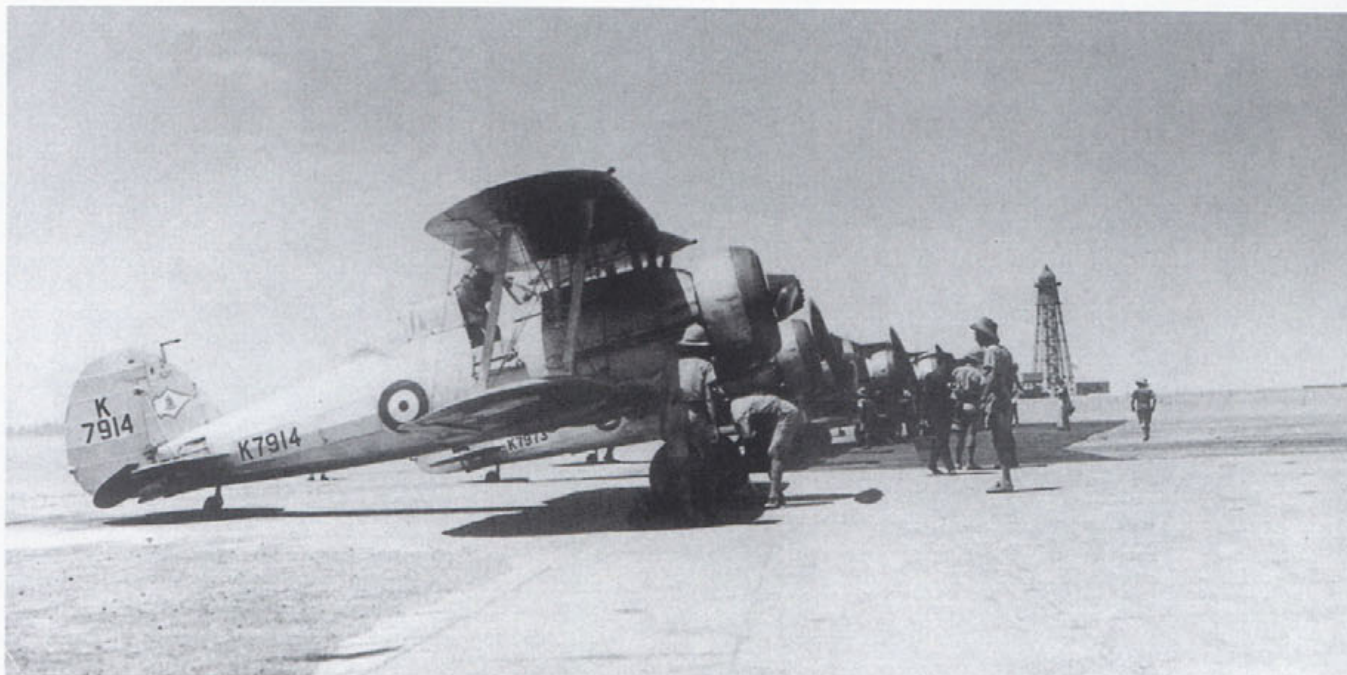
Even at this early stage, the Gladiators found difficulty in catching the faster Italian bombers, like the Savoia SM. 79. Air combats became more frequent, for example early on 4 July two CR. 42s were brought down, whilst near Bardia that evening Fg Off Gray-Worcester (attached from No. 112 Squadron) shot down four CR. 42s out of a total of nine destroyed, plus an SM. 79. No. 112 (less 'B' Flight which was in the Sudan) moved up to Gerawala to support No. 33 and both continued to establish the ascendancy over the Italians that the RAF never lost. On 1 August No. 33 was replaced by 'B' Flight of No. 80 Squadron. Its first combat on 4 August whilst escorting a Lysander inside

Continued from page 10

GLOSTER GLADIATOR PRODUCTION LIST

TRANSFERS

Mark	Number	Serials	Manufacturer	Remarks
EGYPT				
II	18	K1331-K1348	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred to REAF in Mar 39 from RAF contracts (L8005 & L8012-L8028) after modification from Mk I. Some returned to RAF
II	27	L9030-L9047	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred from RAF contracts (N5875-N5892) in 1941.
IRAQ				
I/II	29	Retained RAF serials	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred to RIAF from RAF stocks in Sep 42 (5), July 43 (5), Sep 43 (5), Dec 43 (6) & May 44 (8) Some returned to RAF charge
FINLAND				
I	30	GL-251 - GL-280	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred from RAF stocks December 19 39-January 1940
GREECE				
I	17	Retained RAF serials	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred RAF stocks in Greece late 1940-early 1941.
SOUTH AFRICA				
II	25	K7922, N2278, N2280, N2283, N2285, N2286, N2287, N2288, N2289, N2290, N2292, N2293, N2294, N5788, N5813, N5815, N5820, N5824, N5830, N5831, N5850, N5851, N5852, N5853, N5856	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred RAF stocks for service in East Africa April 1941. Some aircraft transferred from No.94 Squadron in 1941 were renumbered with SAAF serials. Known SAAF serials include 1339, 1342 and 1344.
AUSTRALIA				
II	37	K6142, K7893, K7901, K7913, K7922, K7947, K7963, K8008, K8009, K8020, K8022, K8048, L7615, L7616, L7617, L8008, L8009, N5750, N5752, N5753, N5854, N5756, N5763, N5764, N5765, N5766, N5768, N5769, N5776, N5777, N5779, N5780, N5782, N5786, N5810, N5857, N5889	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred RAF stocks for service in North Africa late 194
PORTUGAL				
II	15	465-479	Gloster Aircraft	Transferred mid-1939. RAF contract batch N5835-N5849
SOVIET UNION				
I	?		Gloster Aircraft	Believed retained Latvian or Lithuanian serials. Ex Latvian and Lithuanian aircraft captured after annexation
GERMANY				
I	13		Gloster Aircraft	Ex Latvian and Lithuanian aircraft captured in Russia in 1941



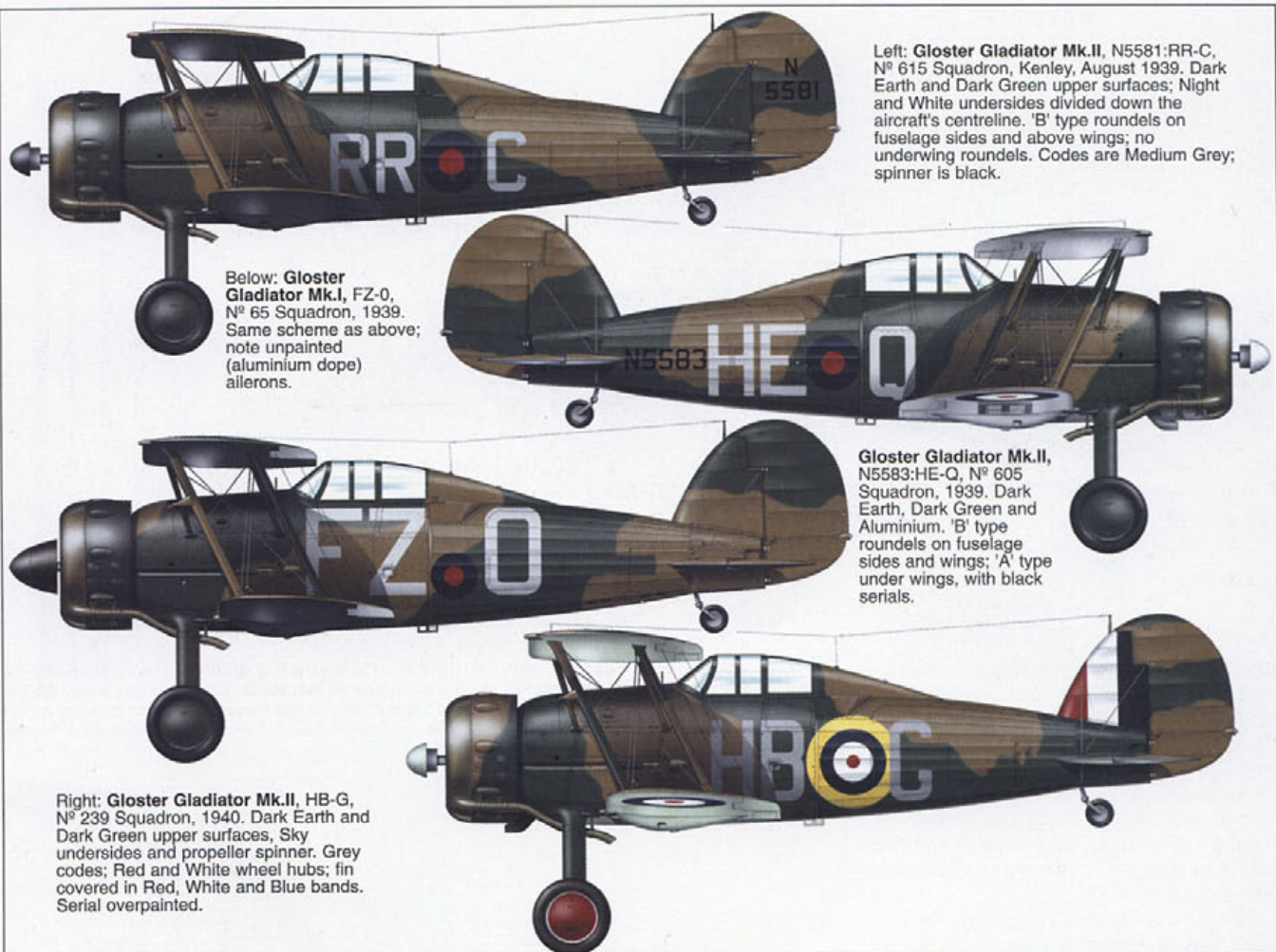
the Libyan border came across a formation of Breda 65 bombers. One quickly fell before the escorting CR. 32s arrived and in the subsequent fight three Gladiators eventually fell though two pilots baled out and returned. One, who claimed a Breda and a Fiat, was Fg Off 'Pat' Pattle who became the leading exponent of the Gladiator and the RAF's leading 'ace' of the war with around 50 victories.

The squadron gained revenge on the 8th when they ambushed an enemy formation and in five minutes claimed nine destroyed and six probables. Pattle flying K7971 avenged the events of the 4th by shooting down two Fiats.

Following the Italian offensive in mid-September, there was only sporadic action although bomber escorts were often flown. A 'new' Gladiator unit came into being too when No. 3 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force received its first aircraft from No. 33 whose last Gladiator left on 26 October. No.

Above: No 80 Squadron moved to Ismailia, Egypt in 1938 where this group are being prepared for flight near the famous airship tower. Below: The markings on this No 80 Squadron Gladiator, K8008, were restricted to the unit's 'Bell' badge within a 'fighter' arrowhead frame on the fin. Bottom: At full strength! Eighteen of No 80's Gladiators seen on 'parade' at Ismailia in 1938. The coloured fins on some denote the aircraft of the Flight Commanders.





Left: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.II**, N5581:RR-C, N° 615 Squadron, Kenley, August 1939. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces; Night and White undersides divided down the aircraft's centreline. 'B' type roundels on fuselage sides and above wings; no underwing roundels. Codes are Medium Grey; spinner is black.

Below: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I**, FZ-0, N° 65 Squadron, 1939. Same scheme as above; note unpainted (aluminium dope) ailerons.

Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, N5583:HE-Q, N° 605 Squadron, 1939. Dark Earth, Dark Green and Aluminium. 'B' type roundels on fuselage sides and wings; 'A' type under wings, with black serials.

Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.II**, HB-G, N° 239 Squadron, 1940. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces, Sky undersides and propeller spinner. Grey codes; Red and White wheel hubs; fin covered in Red, White and Blue bands. Serial overpainted.

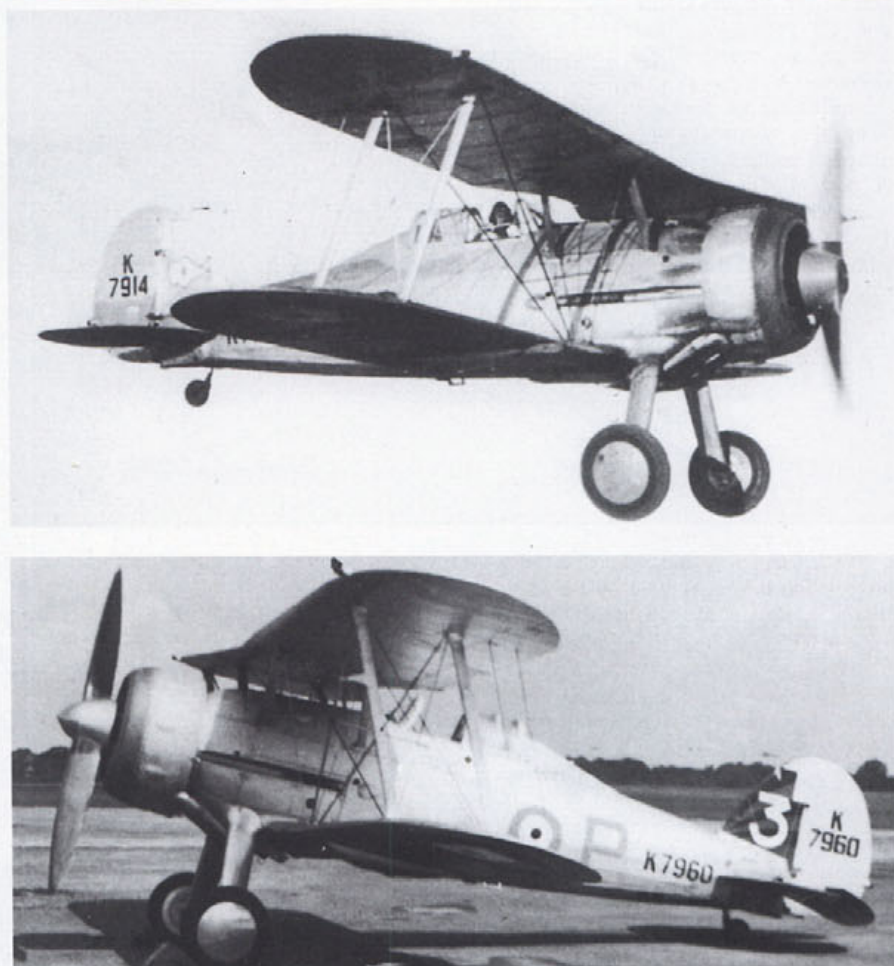
Gladiator Mk.I K7914 was the aircraft of Fg Off J.H. Lapsley who is seen flying it here. He later gained fame in the early fighting in the desert war

80 moved to Greece in mid-November following the Italian invasion but by then the Australians were ready for action. Their first came on 19 November when four Gladiators were attacked by 18 Fiat CR. 42s. In a 25 minute fight the Aussies turned the tables and shot down four for the loss of one of their own. It was a dramatic debut for the Aussies who by the time they re-equipped with Hurricanes in early 1941 had claimed 12 destroyed for the loss of five aircraft and two pilots.

The days of the Gladiator as a fighter in the desert were over, but they continued in use for some time. Both the communications squadrons, Nos. 117 and 267, had several on strength, the latter having a fully camouflaged K7963 by December 1941 and kept it until mid-1943 for example. The Communications Unit, Western Desert was another user, flying K7956 into 1943.

The Gladiator's final operational service in the desert was in the army co-operation role with No. 6 Squadron which in August 1941 received Gladiators for 'C' Flight. On the 28th four Gladiators and four Lysanders were detached to Kufra Oasis for local defence duties. Kufra had received occasional bombing attacks and on 21 September

No. 3 Squadron later changed the markings on its Gladiator Mk. Is as shown on K7960:P at Kenley in 1938. This was the the squadron CO's aircraft.





The RAF's first operational use of the Gladiator was during aerial policing in Palestine by Nos. 33 and 80 Squadrons. These Mk. Is, led by K8013, belong to the former – the second aircraft, L7620 is wearing the pre-war code letters 'SO-O'.

two He 111s appeared. Flt Lt Lee in N5851 and N5821 flown by Flt Lt Hillier took off but as so often the bombers outran them.

On the 26th No. 6 had the distinction of making the RAF's final Gladiator claim when Sgt Ron Walker in N5851 claimed an Italian SM. 81 over the Oasis. He chased it as far as Rodani at a distance of 400 yards and fired some 1,400 rounds.

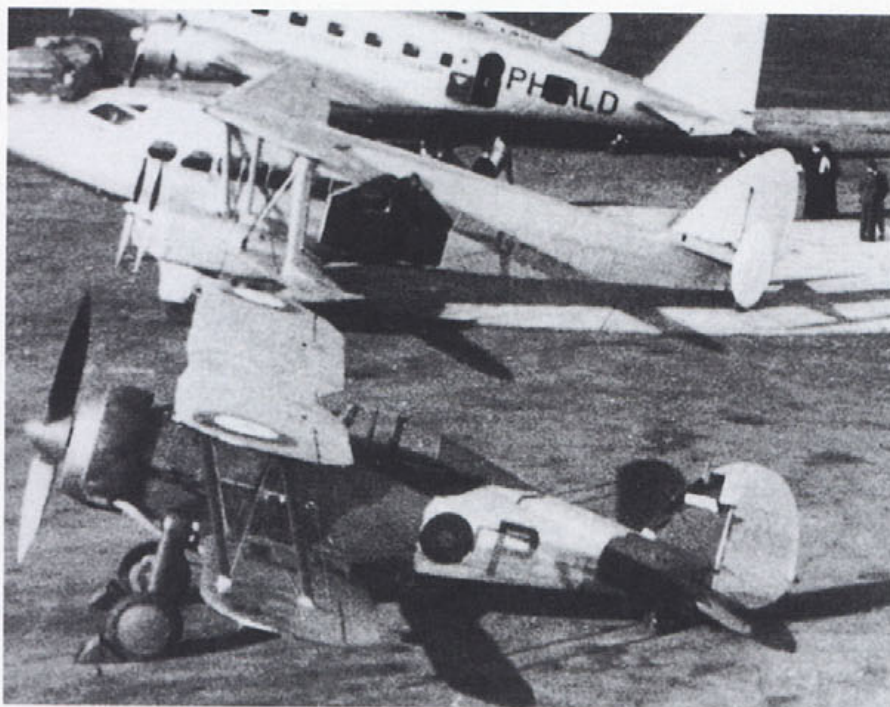
Amongst the various units formed by exiled 'Free French' airmen in North Africa was Groupe de Chasse 'Alsace'. In early 1942 this fighter unit used a few Gladiators as training aircraft, though its main equipment was the Hurricane I. Why the French unit should have received the biplanes is unclear, but they appear to have worn similar markings to the Hurricanes carrying French roundels and the Cross of Lorraine on a white roundel. They were probably used for a few months only before being withdrawn.

MALTA – THE LEGEND

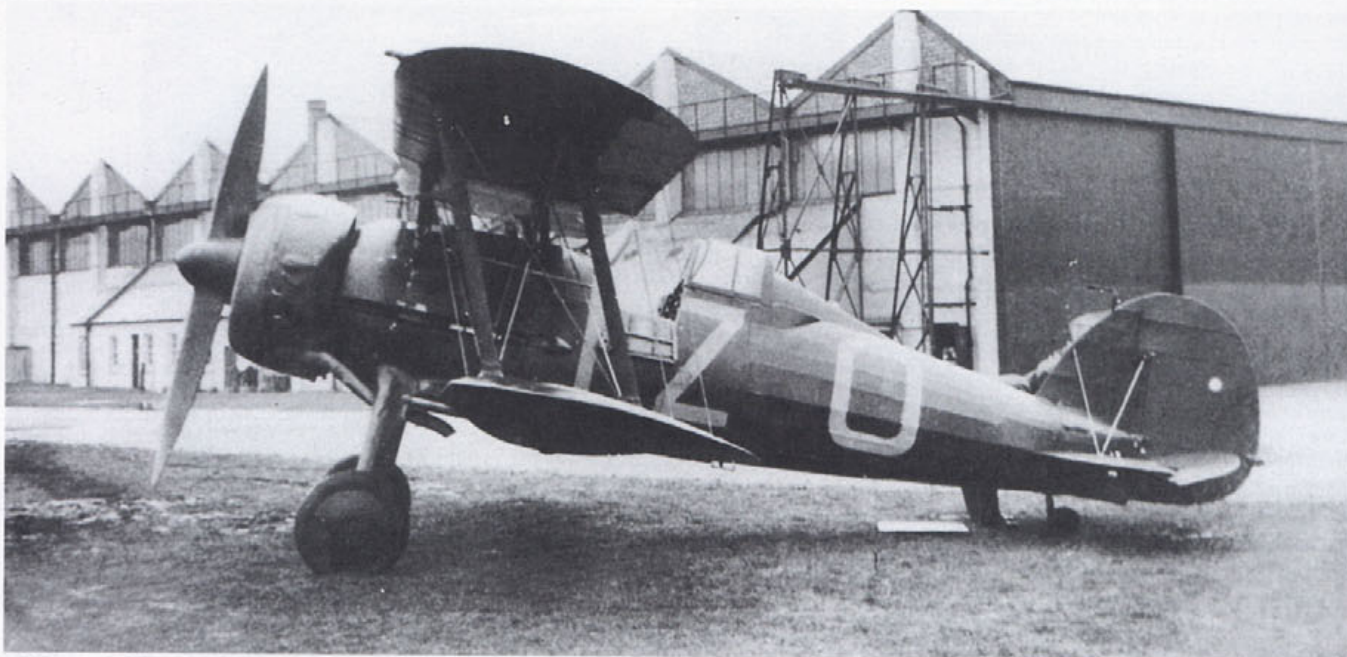
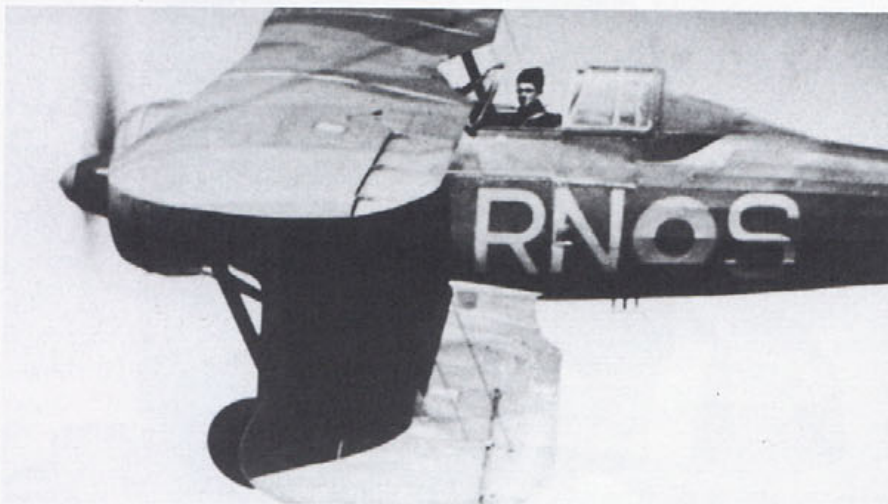
More than any other action it was Malta that gave the Gladiator immortality, the public imagination being captured by the story of 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Charity' fighting against the odds. In reality, the defence of Malta by Gladiators of the Fighter Flight lasted about two weeks as after 21 June 1940 Hurricanes began arriving. The Gladiators flown by volunteer pilots did, however, face the Regia Aeronautica alone for a time and gained several victories. More importantly though they provided an incalculable boost to civilian morale. The previous April 18 crated Sea Gladiators were off-loaded to Hal Far and the Royal Navy agreed that some be used by the RAF for air defence duties. Volunteer RAF pilots began training with



Four-colour upper surface pattern for Gloster Gladiators. Upper surfaces of top wings, elevators and top fuselage decking in Dark Earth and Dark Green; upper surfaces of lower wings and lower half of fuselage sides in Light Earth and Light Green. 'B' type roundels are 36ins diameter (with 16ins diameter central red sector)



Above: Late in 1938 No. 3 Squadron experimented with camouflage as shown on K7960:P whilst visiting Croydon airport. The camouflage is apparently restricted to the fuselage. Below: Fg Off J.B. Nicholson, who later won the VC during the Battle of Britain, engages in some formation practice in his camouflaged Gladiator Mk.I of No. 72 Squadron in early 1939.



the Hal Far Fighter Flight, so that there was a fighter defence for Malta should hostilities with Italy break out.

The first Italian raid by several formations of SM. 79s came on 11 June. These were intercepted but easily outran the biplanes though a bomber and an escorting Macchi 200 were damaged. There were further inconclusive combats but the speed of the SM. 79s always gave problems to the defending Gladiators. The Flight's problems were compounded when it lost two of the precious fighters in crashes, but they were replaced from store.

Success eventually crowned the efforts of the Gladiators on 22 June when a lone SM. 79 flew over Malta and was attacked and shot down over Valletta by Flt Lt Burges in N5519. This was the first confirmed kill for the Malta fighters. The next day two Gladiators again scrambled against a raid, escorted by MC 200s. Burges, again flying N5519 shot down a Macchi MC 200 whilst a few days later Fg Off Woods was credited with an SM. 79.

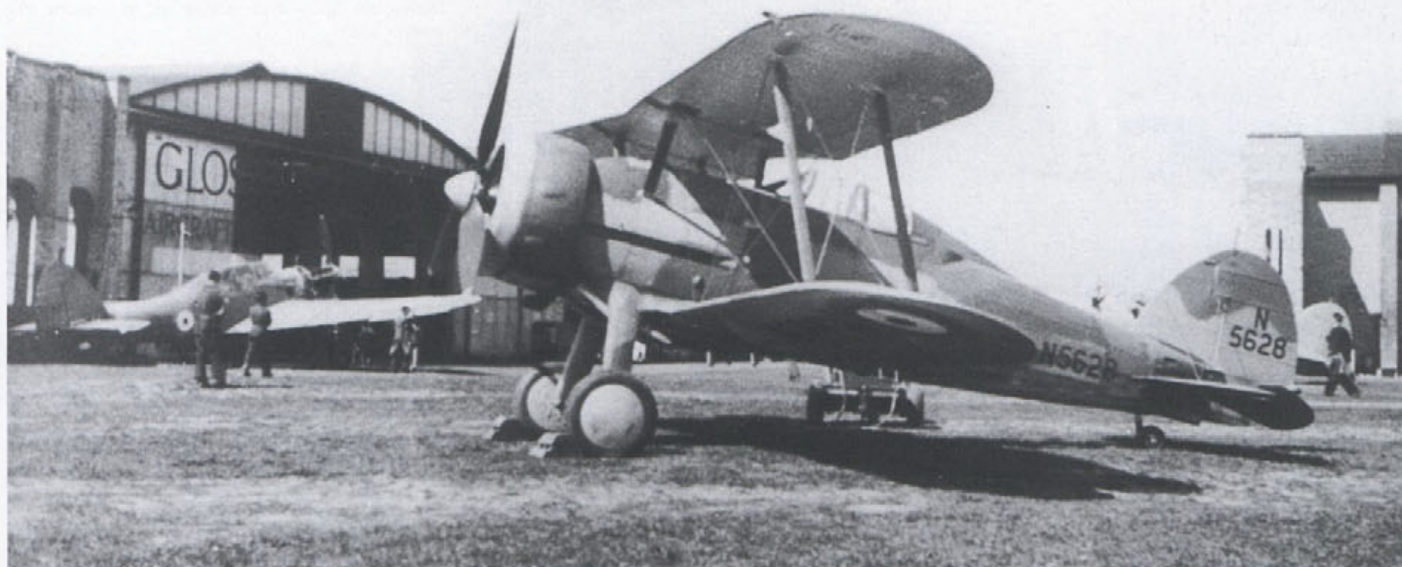
The Gladiator's next success over Malta was not until the end of July when on the 31st in a stiff fight with nine CR. 42s one was shot down. Fg Off Hartley in N5519 was also shot down in flames - the only Malta Gladiator lost in air combat. That was the end of the Fighter Flight which on 1 August became part of the newly formed No. 261 Squadron which flew both Hurricanes and Sea Gladiators.

The Gladiators then flew a decreasing number of patrols over Malta but success eluded them until early November when on the 2nd Flt Lt Burges in N5520 claimed a CR.42 shot down and another damaged. The surviving Gladiators were then used mainly for meteorological duties, the last known sortie being by N5520 in January 1942.

GREEK TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

In response to the Italian invasion of Greece

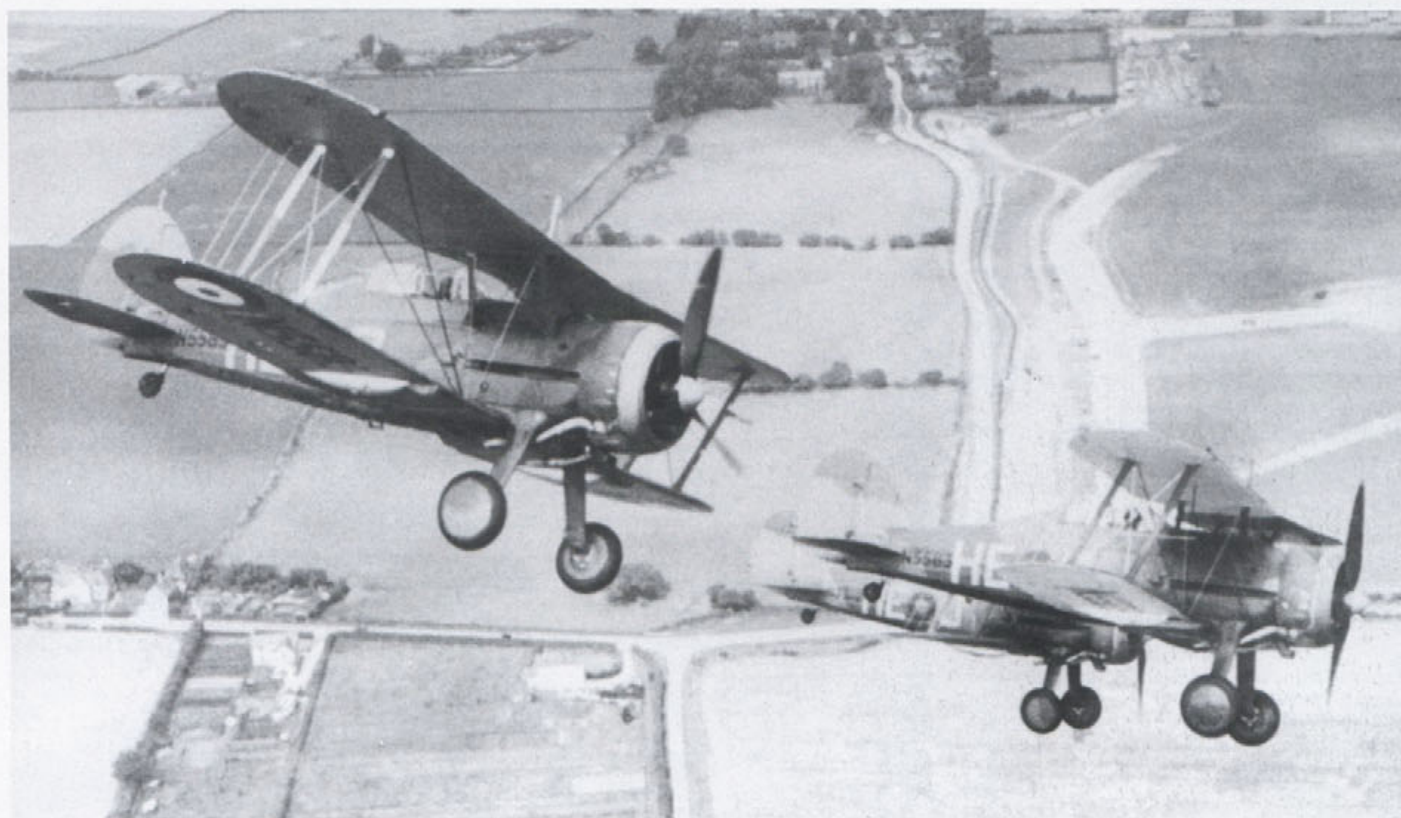
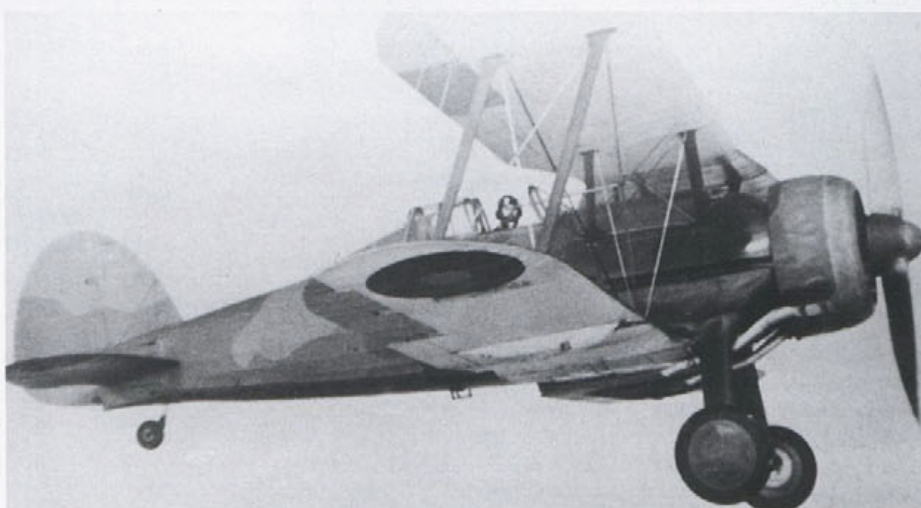
Below: This Gladiator Mk.I, of No. 65 Squadron, coded 'FZ-O', has had its serial overpainted when camouflaged during a visit to Abingdon.



Above: Ready for delivery from Glosters at Hucclecote in mid-1939 is Gladiator II N5628. It went to No. 263 Squadron and was lost in Norway the following year. Right: This anonymous Gladiator Mk. I is from No. 3 Squadron that has been fully camouflaged at the time of the Munich Crisis in September 1938; the unit codes have yet to be added.

No. 80 Squadron was ordered to Eleusis near Athens, though a detachment was soon sent north. The squadron began operations on 19 November 1940 patrolling the Albanian border during which the Gladiators shot down nine CR. 42s and G. 50s. The detachment then moved to Yannina from where on the 27th they destroyed another two CR. 42s. The first loss came soon after-

No 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron was the second 'part time' unit to get Gladiators, this neat formation of Mk IIs is led by N5583:HE-Q.





Left: In Egypt in 1939, the Gladiators of No. 80 Squadron were camouflaged and coded, but as shown on K7908:GK-B, they also retained the fin badge! Lower left: The first Auxiliary Air Force squadron to re-equip with Gladiators was No. 607 (County of Durham) Squadron from December 1938 and whose aircraft wore the codes 'LW'.



total to 15 destroyed, three probables and five damaged.

No. 80 then began to re-equip with Hurricanes and from the 20th No. 112's Gladiators began regular patrols, opening their account in Greece when a G. 50 went down in flames. A week later a mixed formation of Hurricanes and Gladiators from Nos. 80 and 112 Squadrons found an escorted formation of BR. 20s and despite the inevitable confusion the Gladiator pilots made claims for five G. 50s, six CR. 42s and an SM. 79.

After this No. 80 passed its surviving Gladiators to No. 112 Squadron which continued fighting alongside the Hurricanes of Nos. 33 and 80 Squadrons. In early March 'A' Flight detached to Paramythia and on the 9th the Italian spring offensive began. No. 112 found a large formation of G. 50s and CR. 42s escorting BR. 20s. The CO led the Gladiators down and a number of confirmed claims were made.

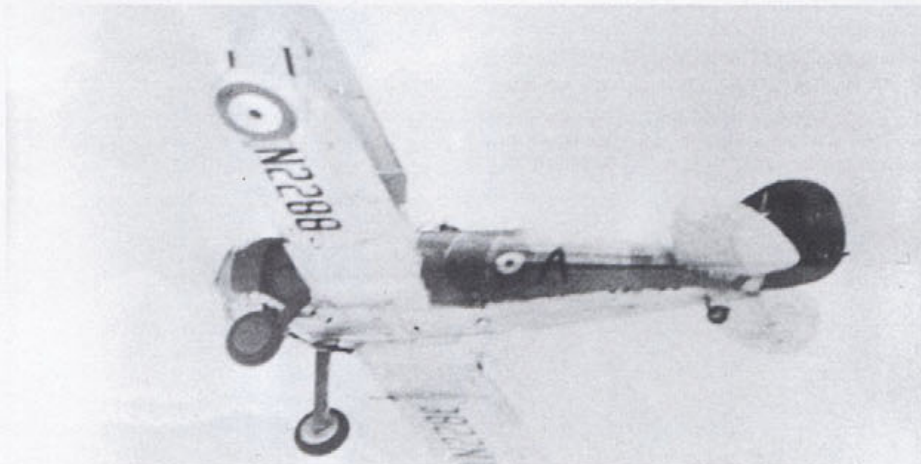
But No. 112's most successful day came on 13 March when over Tepelene they hit a formation of SM. 79s with their escort. Three of No. 112's pilots shot down eight fighters between them. No. 112 had another successful encounter with about 40 Italian fighters the next day when against the loss of one Gladiator they destroyed a BR. 20 bomber

wards, however when a Gladiator collided with a CR. 42 over Delvinakion. No. 80 Squadron quickly established its reputation with Flt Lt Pattle scoring regularly. In N5832 on 2 December he destroyed a Ro 37 biplane and in the afternoon he claimed another, as did his wingman.

The next day No. 80 concentrated at Larrissa and was reinforced by a detachment from No. 112 Squadron but soon afterwards No. 80 was rested and its Gladiators given a well needed overhaul.

No. 80 resumed operations on 19 December and the next day two of the fast SM. 79s fell to them. Further success came over Argyrokastron the next day when its Gladiators hit an Italian formation and claimed eight for the loss of two, including the CO. Reinforcements began arriving in mid-January 1941 when all of No. 112 Squadron moved into Eleusis, No. 80 remained largely at Yannina. On 28 January 15 aircraft patrolled between Kelcyre and Premeti and shot down two Italians but heavy rain then restricted operations into February. No. 80 made further claims against the Italians who also raided Yannina, after which part of No. 112 Squadron arrived to reinforce No. 80. On these raids Pattle made his final Gladiator claims to bring his

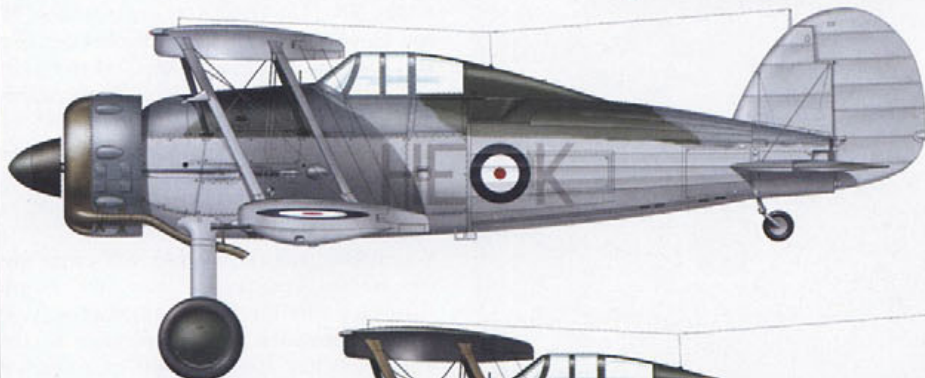
Top right: In mid-1939 No. 94 Squadron was formed with Gladiators for the defence of the vital port of Aden. One of its aircraft was N2288:A. Right: This Gladiator Mk.I of No. 80 Squadron, coded 'GK-Z', illustrates the fin badge well. Its tailplane is being used as an impromptu dining table!





Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, N2306:HP-B, N° 247 Squadron, 1940. Shadow-shaded top surfaces in Dark Earth and Dark Green with Light Earth and Light Green on top of lower wings, lower half of fuselage sides and rudder. Black spinner and Sky undersides. Grey codes and large fin flash in Red, White and Blue. 'B' type markings above top wings

Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, GK-Z, N° 80 Squadron, Egypt 1940. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces. Black and White undersides of fuselage and lower wings only. Note attempt to tone down earlier 'bright' colours on fuselage roundel



Left: Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, HE-K, N° 263 Squadron, Norway, Spring 1940. Dark Green and Medium Sea Grey upper surfaces; Sky Grey undersides; top surfaces of lower wing in Light Green and Sky Grey. Codes in Medium Sea Grey; serial overpainted. 'B' type roundels above wings; 'A' type on fuselage sides and under wings

Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, N5641:HE-B, N° 263 Squadron, Norway, Spring 1940. Standard four-colour scheme, with Aluminium undersides; Night port and White starboard undersides of both wings



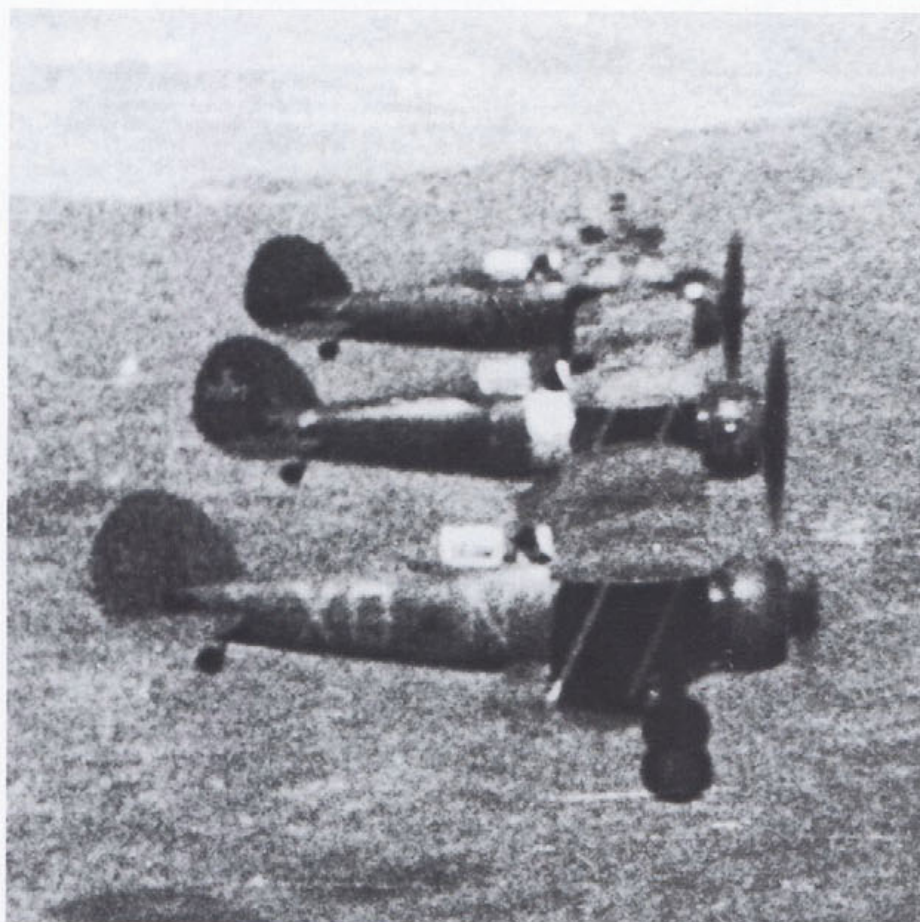
Below: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, K6135:RT-E, N° 112 Squadron, 1940. Matt Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces. White undersides of starboard wings and tailplane; Night undersides of fuselage, port wings and tailplane

Below: Gloster Gladiator, L8011:YK-O, flown by Flt Lt T. Pattle, N° 80 Squadron. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surface scheme with undersides divided in black (port) and white. Codes in white, serial in black



Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, N2309:B, N° 1401 (Met) Flight at Bircham Newton, late 1942. Ocean Grey and Dark Green upper surfaces; Medium Sea Grey undersides. 'C1' fuselage roundels, 'B' type above top wings and 'C' type under the lower wings. Black spinner; Sky Grey code letter 'B'





Left: A poor but very interesting photo of three Gladiators of No. 112 Squadron over Suez before World War 2. The nearest is coded XO-N.

and three fighters.

Operations continued from Paramythia as No. 112's re-equipment was planned but on 5 April the situation dramatically changed with the German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece. The RAF's hard won ascendancy was lost and the biplane Gladiators instantly outclassed by the Luftwaffe's Bf 109s and Bf 110s. No. 112 assisted in covering the withdrawal and on 13 April shot down a G. 50 – its last kill on the mainland. That evening No. 112 escorted a Yugoslav SM. 79 carrying King Peter into exile as the enemy forced an evacuation. No match for the Messerschmitts, No. 112's Gladiators were ordered to Heraklion, Crete, on the 22nd. On 5 May No. 112's Gladiators damaged a Ju 88 and on the 13th a Bf 110. The next day two Bf 110s were shot down – the Gladiator's last victories of the campaign as soon afterwards No. 112 was evacuated to Egypt and re-equipped with Tomahawks.

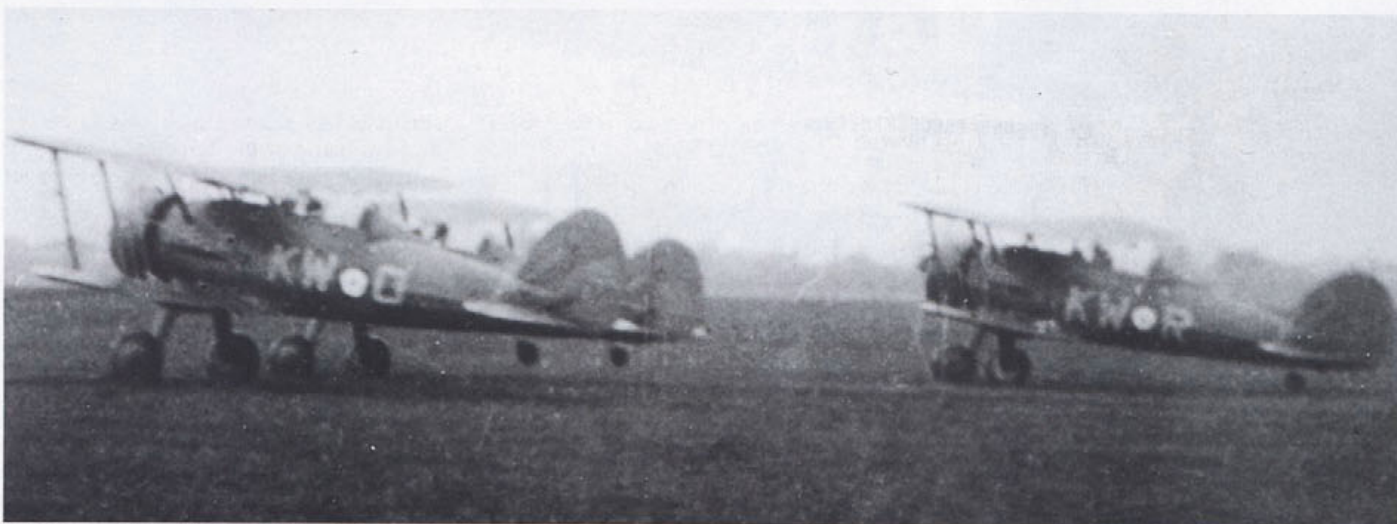
EAST AFRICA

Whilst Gladiators of the RAF battled against the Regia Aeronautica over the North African desert the Italian colonies in East Africa threatened British interests in the area, including the vital port of Aden. At Sheikh Othman was No. 94 Squadron with eight Gladiator IIs and eight Mk Is in reserve. The defence of Kenya fell to the South African Air Force whose 'C' Flight of No. 1 Squadron was in Egypt for conversion to Gladiators. Additionally, 'B' Flt No. 112 Squadron had moved to the Sudan in June, being split between Summit and Port Sudan.

On the outbreak of war Italian Savoia SM. 81 bombers quickly began raids against Port Sudan and Aden. On the night of the 13 June during a raid against Aden No. 94 scrambled four Gladiators, including N5590 which shot down an SM. 81 in flames; later that night two SM. 79s were also damaged. On the 18th a Gladiator spotted the Italian subma-



Left: A Gladiator Mk.II of No. 615 Squadron is refuelled at Merville in late 1939 after a patrol covering the French coast. Note the black and white undersides apparent under the top wing. Below: On 14 November 1939 the Gladiator Mk.IIs of No. 615 Squadron left Croydon for service in France, this trio being caught as they left English soil.



The winter of 1939-40 was a bitter one as shown in this view of a Gladiator of No. 607 Squadron as it taxis from a cleared strip at Vitry en Artois, France in early 1940

rine *Galileo Galilei* off Aden and summoning other air and naval units it was captured - an unusual claim for a fighter squadron!

On 29 June No. 112's Sudan detachment also got into action when L7619 found an SM. 81 of 28 Gruppo, and shot it down into the sea. Further south, on 2 July during an attack on Assab by No. 94 Squadron a pair of Fiat CR. 42s were caught in the air and destroyed. To bolster the fighter force, at the end of July the Gladiators of 'C' Flight No. 1 Squadron SAAF left Egypt for Kenya, though it kept nine others in the Sudan.

Elsewhere, for the defence of British Somaliland a detachment of No. 94 moved to Berbera where they lost several aircraft before evacuation. Meanwhile, in the Sudan No. 112 claimed a Caproni Ca 133 on 1 August when it was shot down by K7974:RT-O. Later that month this detachment became 'K' Flight and by then the SAAF Gladiators had found action both in Kenya and in the Sudan.

At the end of September No. 1 SAAF's Kenya element with nine Gladiators, became No. 2 Squadron SAAF, leaving No. 1 in the Sudan. On 4 October No. 1's Gladiators chased three CR. 42s and brought down two including one by Capt Boyle who was to become the leading SAAF Gladiator pilot.

Soon afterwards No. 2 in Kenya passed its Gladiators to No. 1 Squadron to bring it up to strength. As preparations for the British offensive continued, the fighters covered them, with the South Africans downing two on 4 November. Two days later when the attack began three Gladiators of 'K' Flight were bounced by CR. 42s and all three lost and soon afterwards No. 1 lost its CO. The severe fighter losses and heavy bombing attacks by Ca. 133s made the situation serious but at the end of a day of bitter fighting Gallabat Fort was finally captured but evacuated the next day. After the withdrawal, the Gladiators of No. 1 Squadron and 'K' Flt

Gladiator Mk.II N2306 was a survivor! Having served in France with No. 615 Squadron it was evacuated and joined No. 16 Squadron as shown here, later being coded 'UG-R'. Later still served with No. 239 Squadron before being used as a personal 'hack'.



returned to Khartoum and Port Sudan. Sporadic raids on Aden and Port Sudan continued, one on 20 November giving No. 94 Squadron its final success of the campaign when the CO flying N5627 destroyed an SM. 81 three miles east of Khormaksar.

In the Sudan, Hurricanes began arriving for No. 1 Squadron which in readiness for a coming offensive concentrated at Tessenei, the first airfield 'liberated' in Eritrea. On 3 February six of No. 1's Gladiators flew to a

The only Gladiator squadron with RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain was No. 247 to which N2306:HP-B belonged in August 1940.

new strip at 'Pretoria'. They patrolled the Gondar area and were opposed by Fiat CR. 42s and in the resulting dogfight two Fiats fell. 'K' Flight meanwhile was also active, shooting down a lone SM. 79 during a Blenheim escort on 22 February. Later in the month No. 1 Squadron, passed its well used Gladiators to 'B' Flight, No. 237 Squadron.

This Rhodesian squadron flew a miscellany of Hardys and Lysanders for army co-operation duties, for which the Gladiators would also be used. It began operations on 7 March before the assault on the Italian stronghold at Keren which was to be the decisive battle of the Eritrean campaign. It was a frustrating time for the eager Rhodesians as Italian fighters appeared more frequently and the Lysanders and Hardys suffered crippling losses. The Gladiators also flew on close support work and on 16 March a pair were attacked by CR. 42s but Plt Off Simmonds shot one down in flames. The Rhodesian Gladiators continued on their support and escort work and also made some effective attacks on Italian airfields where numbers of Ca 133s, SM. 79s and Fiat CR.42s were destroyed.

March 1941 saw 'K' Flight withdrawn to



Palestine whilst in Kenya some Gladiators were issued to No. 3 Squadron SAAF, though the old biplanes saw little further air combat but continued in the close support role. It was apposite, therefore, that the last Italian aircraft shot down in East Africa fell to a Gladiator when a CR. 42 was shot down on 24 October, shortly before the Italian surrender.

Some of the South African Gladiators had been renumbered and given SAAF four digit serials and later some of these, possibly only two or three, were used for fighter training at Gordon's Tree in the Sudan.

SIDESHOWS

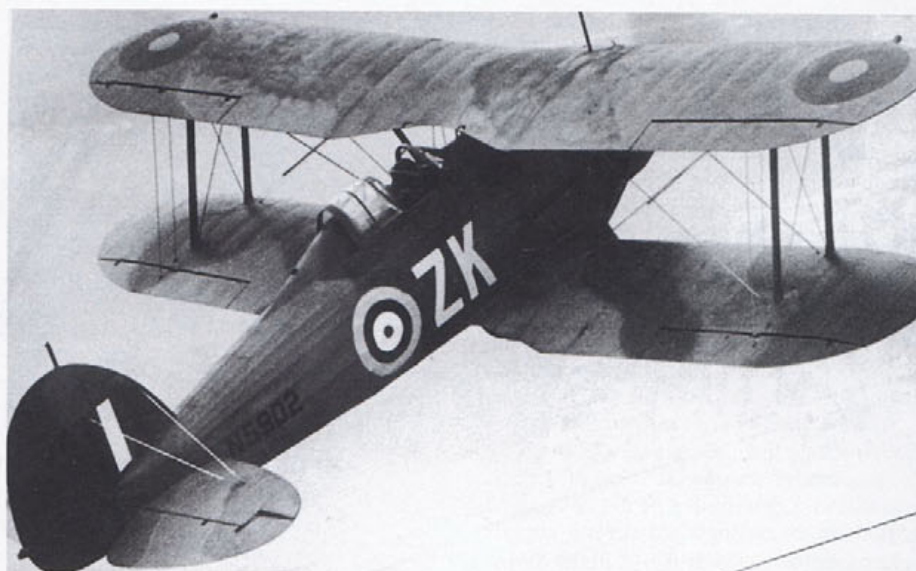
In April 1941 a pro-Axis coup took place in Iraq when on 29 April strong Iraqi forces surrounded the RAF base at Habbaniya, west of Baghdad. The resident flying training school, No. 4 SFTS, had been reinforced, including the delivery of six Gladiators that joined three others in a Fighter Flight. In Egypt No. 94 Squadron, which was converting to Hurricanes, collected five Gladiators from an MU and proceed to Habbaniya. Interestingly, Gladiators served the Royal Iraqi Air Force too, nine being with No. 4 (Fighter) Squadron at Kirkuk.

Six Iraqi Gladiators strafed Habbaniya on 2 May and destroyed three aircraft. The FTS Fighter Flight was also active disrupting Iraqi attacks and hitting an Iraqi SM. 79B causing it to crash land in the desert. Later, they intercepted a formation of Northrop 8A-4s and damaged one which also crash landed. Iraqi Gladiators attacked and hit a Wellington which was shot down being shared with anti aircraft fire.

The constant attacks on the Iraqis forced their withdrawal from Habbaniya on 6 May. The following day one of the Fighter Flight aircraft was attacked by an Iraqi Gladiator which was in turn fired on and believed to have crashed.

That same day No. 94 Squadron began to move and soon afterwards German support for the Iraqis arrived in the shape of Bf 110s and He 111s. The latter from 4/KG 4 attacked Habbaniya on the 16th and were engaged by L7616 of No. 94 Squadron which was caught in crossfire and shot down. One of the Heinkels had been hit and it later crash landed. The day after this two of No. 94's Gladiators carried out a patrol over Raschid where two Bf 110s of 1/ZG 76 were surprised as they took off and both shot down. Italian support also began to arrive on 23 May and on the 29th whilst escorting three Audax on a bombing raid No. 94's CO shot down a CR. 42 in the final air combat of the brief campaign.

The ceasefire just about ended the Gladiator's operational career as a fighter in the RAF. However, a small unit, 'X' Flight, formed with eight Gladiators on 6 June and were established at Amman for the invasion of Syria. It too saw action, supporting Free French troops on 9 June whilst the following day at Habbaniya No. 127 Squadron formed



Above: Gladiator Mk.II N5902 was one of the last built and had a lengthy history serving in the fighter role before becoming a communications aircraft with No. 24 Squadron as shown here. It later flew on meteorological reconnaissance duties and was written off in December 1944. Below: The first Gladiator war patrols were flown by No. 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron but within a few weeks they had been replaced by Spitfires; K7938 is the nearest.

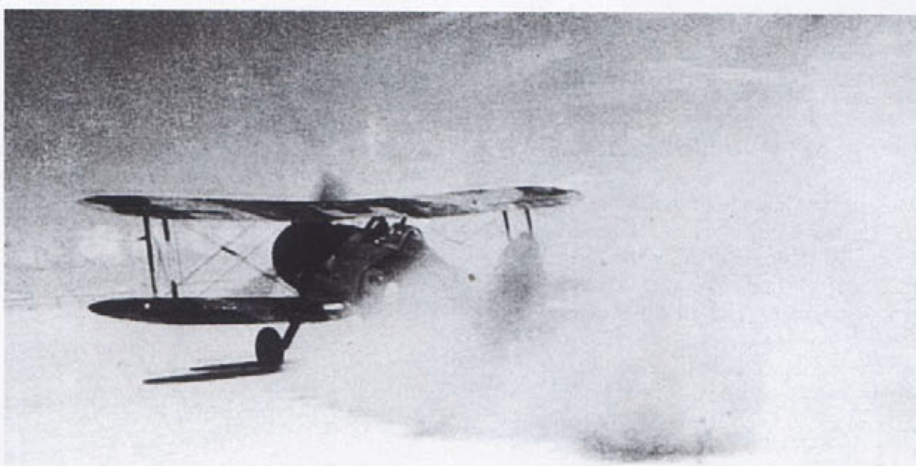


with Hurricanes and four Gladiators - K7899, K7907, K8048 and N5857.

On the 15th the 'X' Flt aircraft fought Vichy French Dewotine D.520s two of which were claimed for the loss of K7947 with another badly damaged. Three days later 'X' Flight Gladiators attacked more D.520s and claimed two for no loss and soon afterwards it moved to H-4 desert airfield to give close support to the advancing troops.

No. 127's aircraft also assisted the advance along the Euphrates toward Aleppo and saw some action. 'X' Flight moved into Palmyra in early July where two of its surviving aircraft were damaged by strafing D.520s soon afterwards. However, a ceasefire came into effect so that it and No. 127 returned to Habbaniya where they were amalgamated into a reformed No. 261 Squadron.

No. 261 itself became involved in another



Gladiator Mk.I K8011:YK-S of No. 80 Squadron stirs up the dust as it takes off from a desert airstrip in 1940. The wing camouflage pattern is readily visible.



Left: **Gloster Sea Gladiator**, N5500:T6L, 769 Squadron, 1939. Standard 'silver' scheme of Aluminium dope over all fabric areas, adonised aluminium metal panels. Red, Blue and Red fuselage bands with white code 'T6L'. White spinner

Right: **Gloster Sea Gladiator**, N5502:135, 801 Squadron Fleet Air Arm, on board *HMS Courageous*, early 1939. Standard 'silver' scheme. Bright Blue fuselage band; standard roundels in four wing positions; spinner is white



Left: **Gloster Sea Gladiator Mk.II**, N5519:G6A of 802 Squadron, *HMS Glorious*, 1939. Standard 'silver' scheme. Black fin and propeller spinner, Yellow carrier colour chevron on fuselage and wheel hubs

Gloster Sea Gladiator Mk.I, N5567:6-C, N° 813 Squadron, *HMS Eagle*, Mediterranean, 1940. Standard FAA scheme of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey on upper surfaces, with shadow-compensating colours of Dark Sea Grey and Light Slate Grey on top of bottom wings only; undersides in Sky Grey. Codes in Red, five inch bar fin flashes, 'B' type roundels above wings



sideshow in the area when it supported the occupation of the Iranian oilfields in late August 1941. No. 261 had four Gladiators (K6147, K7928, K7984 and K7989) which flew support sorties and attacks on Ahwaz. There was little opposition and the operation ended on the 28th. The remaining Gladiators became a reformed 'X' Flight as part of the occupation force in Iran and served for some time. One or two Gladiators served with No. 237 Squadron covering the Kirkuk oilfields from Mosul whilst later in the year No. 123 Squadron formed a Flight of Gladiators at Abadan in October and November. With their withdrawal, the days of the fighter biplane in the RAF ended.

SECOND LINE WORK

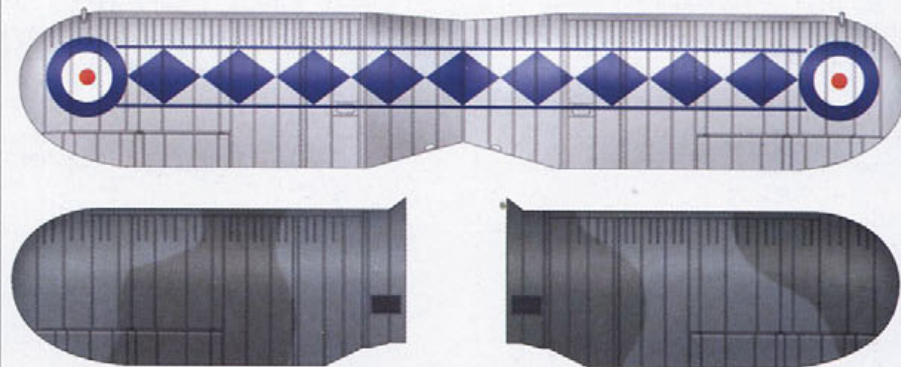
Mention has already been made of the use of the Gladiator following its retirement from front line duties. Probably the most important second line task was meteorological reconnaissance. The first Gladiators were issued to Met Flights in the UK before the war when twice a day an ascent recorded weather observations for the forecasters. The greatly increased need for met information during the war led to an expansion of the number of Flights conducting the task.



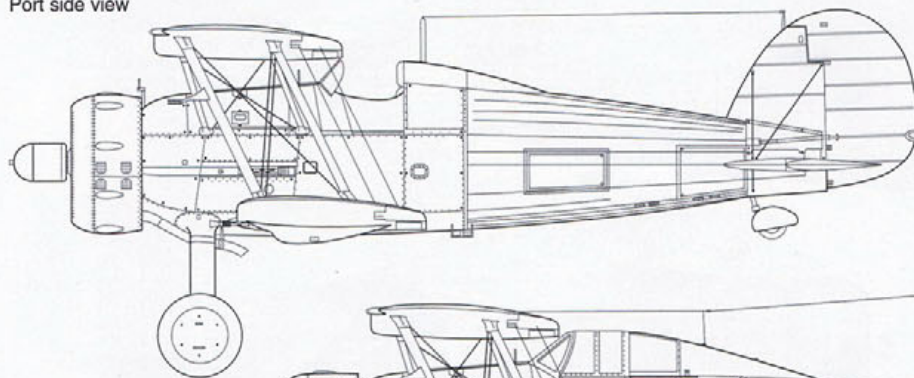
Gloster Sea Gladiator N5524, N° 261 Squadron, Luqa, Malta, January 1941. Dark Green and Dark Earth upper surfaces; Sky undersides. Standard RAF markings for the period except for five inch bars on fin flash retained from original naval colour scheme, as is the replacement cowlings in the old colours.

Below: Top wing markings for N5519:G6A shown above.

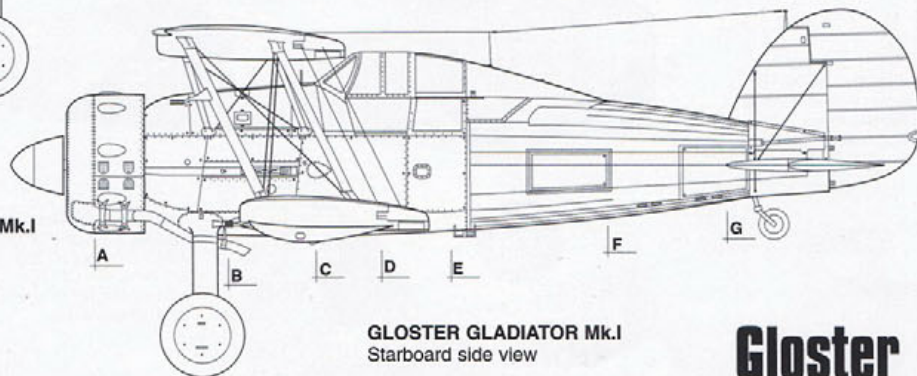
Bottom: Camouflage pattern for upper surfaces of lower wings in Dark Sea Grey and Light Slate Grey (see inside front cover for rest of scheme)



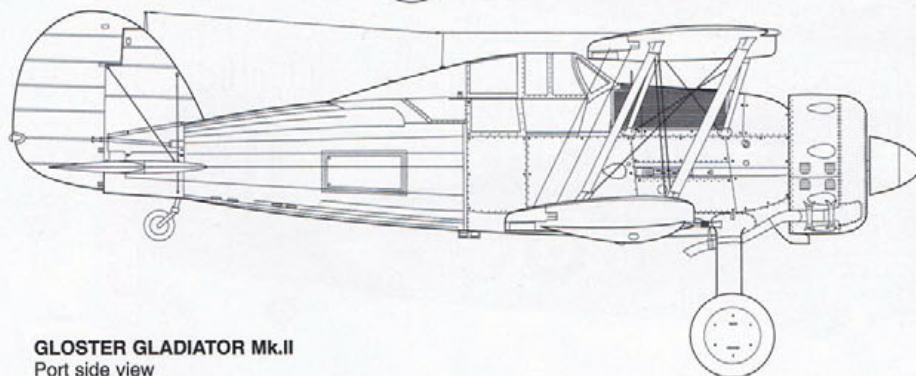
GLOSTER GLADIATOR PROTOTYPE
Port side view



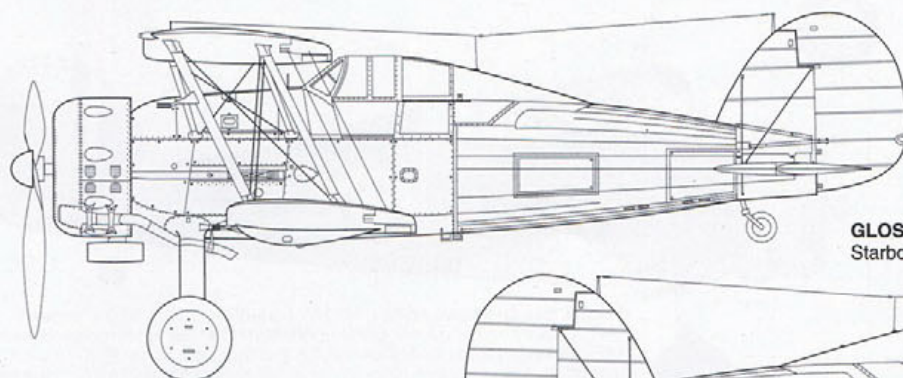
GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.I
Port side view



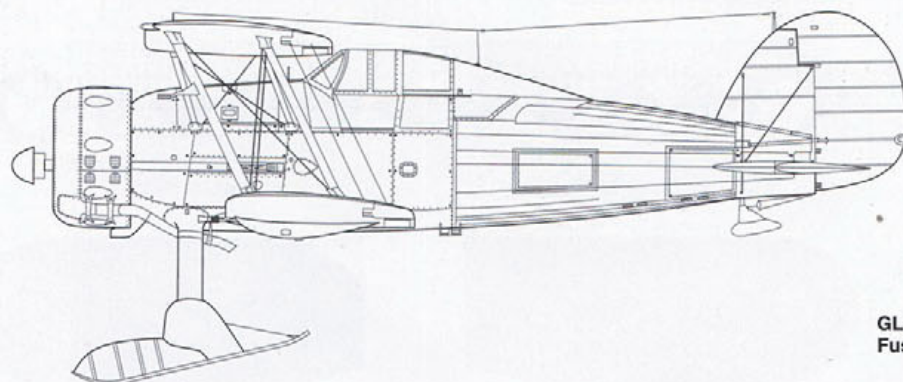
GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.I
Starboard side view



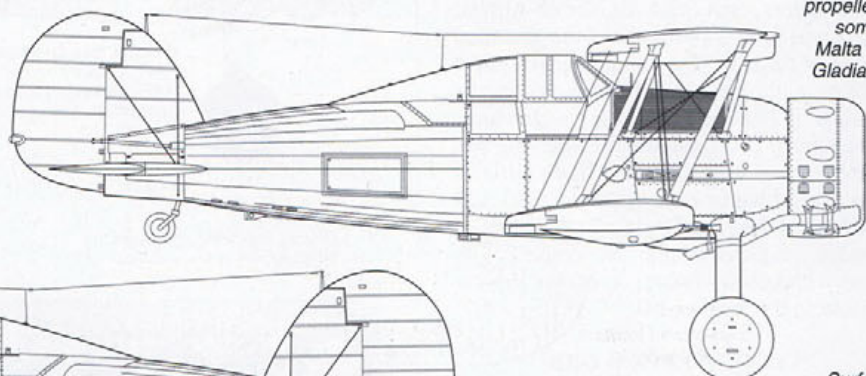
GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.II
Port side view



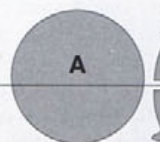
GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.II
(Ski Version) Port side view



GLOSTER SEA GLADIATOR
Starboard side view



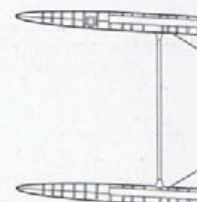
GLOSTER SEA GLADIATOR
Fuselage Cross-Sections



Gloster GLADIATOR

Drawings by
Richard Caruana

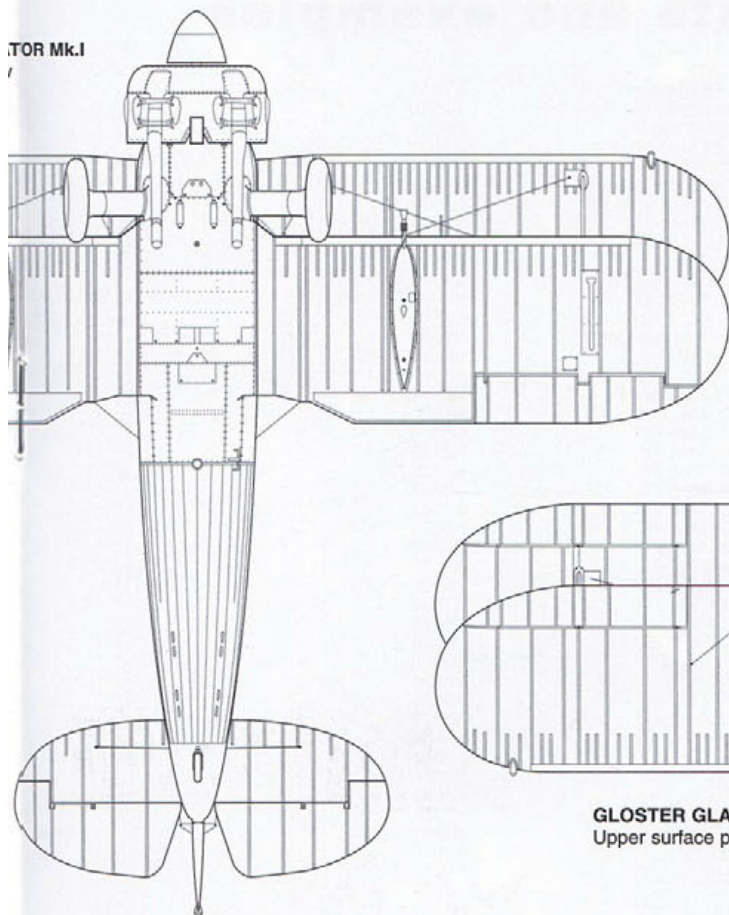
GLOSTER GLADIATOR
Front View



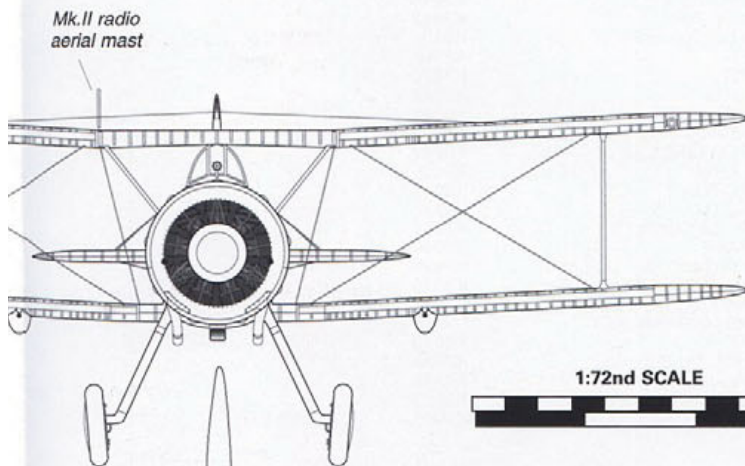
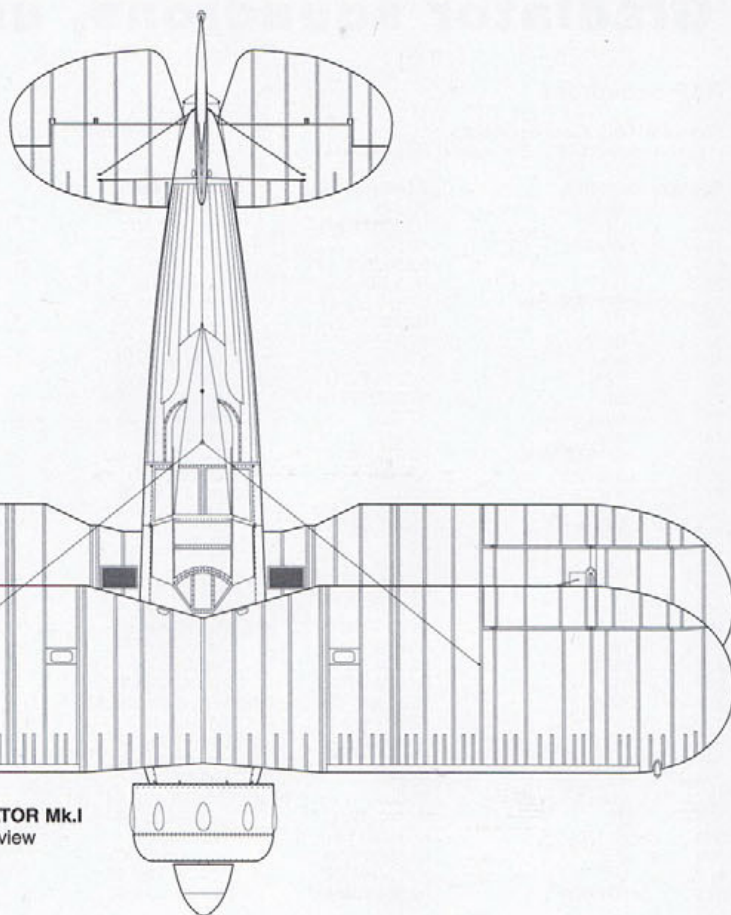
Hamilt
Stand
propeller
some
Malta
Gladiator

Surfa
this

GLADIATOR Mk.I



GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.I
Upper surface plan view



Mk.II radio
aerial mast

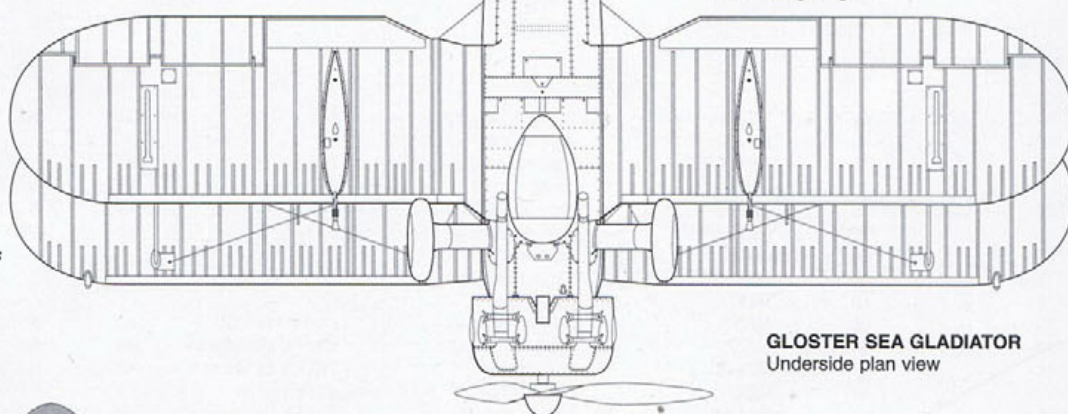
Fairey Reed
Propeller

Two-bladed Watts
Propeller

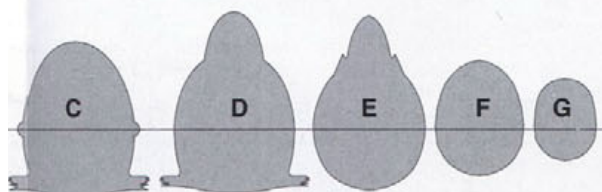
1:72nd SCALE

Feet
Metres

Note dinghy stowage
fairing between
undercarriage legs



GLOSTER SEA GLADIATOR
Underside plan view



Gladiator squadrons, units and examples

RAF Squadrons

Codes only listed if used on Gladiators
(* = pre-war allocation) + = partial equipment only

Sqn No	Code/s	Example	Dates used
6+	nil	N5821	Aug 41-Jan 42
16+	UG	N2306/UG-R	Mar-Sep 40
18+	WV	N2309	ca mid-1940
24+	ZK	N5902/ZK	ca mid-1940
25	RX*	N....RX-L	Jun-Dec 38
33	SO*/TN*/NW	L7620/SO-O	Feb 38-Oct 40
53+	PZ	N2310	ca mid-1940
54	DL*	K7920	Apr 37-Apr 39
56	n/a	K7994	Jul 37-May 38
65	FZ*	K7941/FZ-U	Jun 37-Apr 39
72	RN*	K7981/RN-D	Mar 37-Apr 39#
73	n/a	K7965	Jun 37-Jul 38
74	n/a	K6147	Jun-Jul 37
80	OD*/TN*/YK	K7973/YK-Y	Mar 37-Apr 41
85+	n/a	K7969	Jun-Sep 38
87	n/a	K8027	Jun 37-Jul 38
94	GO	L7616/GO-D	Mar 39-May 41
112	XO*/RT	K6135/RT-E	Jun 39-May 41
117+	nil	K7925	Apr 41-ca mid 42
123+	nil	N5857	Oct-Nov 42
127+	nil	K7907	Jun-Jul 41
141	nil	N5902	Oct-Nov 39
152	UM	N5640/UM-M	Oct 39-Jan 40
237+	nil	N5824	Mar-Aug 41
239+	HB	N2304/HB-G	Sep-Dec 40
247	HP	N5682/HP-K	Aug 40-Jan 41
261+	nil	N5519/R 'Charity' (Malta)	Aug 40-Jan 41
		K7907 (Iraq)	Jul-Sep 41
263	HE	N5908/HE-F	Oct 39-Jun 40
267+	nil	K7925	Mar 41-late 41
274+	YK?	N5786	Aug-Nov 40
520+	2M	N5630	Sep 43-Aug 44
521+	TE	N5902/TE-L	Jul 42-Mar 43
603	RL*/XT	K6132/XT-E	Mar-Oct 39
605	HE*	N5586/HE-K	Apr-Aug 39
607	LW*/AF	K7931/AF-N	Dec 38-Mar 40
615	RR*/KW	N2304/KW-R	Jun 39-May 40
1 RAAF	NW	N5752/NW-G	Sep 40-Jan 41
1 SAAF	nil	N5824	May 40-Feb 41
2 SAAF	nil	N5815	Sep-Nov 40
3 SAAF	nil	N2278	Mar-Nov 41

also briefly re-used type for 2 weeks in Mar 40

RAF Miscellaneous Units

Met Flt Aldergrove	N5590
Andover Stn Flt	K7980
Boscombe Down Stn Def Flt	K8042
Christchurch Stn Flt	K8049
Croydon Stn Defence Flt	
Met Flt El Adem	K8008
Elmdon Stn Flt	K8015
Gosport Stn Flt	K8995
Met Flt Habbaniya	K7899
Hal Far Ftr Flt	N5531 'Hope'
Harwell Stn Flt	N5625
Comm Flt Heliopolis	K7995
Iraq Comm Flt	K6147
Kenley Stn Flt	K8014

Royal Navy

Squadrons

759+	nil	N2270	Nov 39-May 43
760+	nil	N2282	Apr-Sep 40
769+	T6*	N5500/T6L	May-Nov 39; Jul 42-Oct 43
770+	nil	N5543	Nov 39-Apr 40
771+	T8	N2282/T8M	Dec 41-Jun 44
774+	04	K8052	ca Apr 43
775+	nil	N5505/A	Oct 41-Feb 44
776+	nil	N2271	Jan-Jul 42
778+	nil	N2265	Dec 41-Mar 43
787+	nil	N2269	Mar 41-Nov 42
791+	nil	N2298	Mar 42
792+	nil	N2271	Jun 41-Jun 42
800+	nil	K6129	Oct 38-Feb 39
801	134-143	N5502/135	Feb-May 39

Met Flt Khartoum	K7951
Khormaksar Stn Flt	N2280
Manston Stn Flt	K8001
Met Flt Mildenhall	N5621
Northolt Stn Flt	K8012
Ouston Stn Flt	K6132
Prestwick Fighter Flt	N5914
Met Flt Ramleh	K7924
Shetland Ftr Flt	N5622
Terhill Stn Flt	K7927
Turnhouse Stn Flt	L8029
Usworth Stn Flt	K7992
Wadi Halfa Flt	L7616
Watchfield Stn Def Flt	K7999
Met Flt Waterloo	N5684
410/1401 (Met) Flt	N5902/TE-L
402/1402 (Met) Flt	N5576
1403 (Met) Flt	N5630
1411 (Met) Flt	N5825
1412 (Met) Flt	K6140
1413 (Met) Flt	K7914
1414 (Met) Flt	N5821
1415 (Met) Flt	K6147
1560 (Met) Flt	N5625
1561 (Met) Flt	N5593
1562 (Met) Flt	N5622
1563 (Met) Flt	K8003
1565 Flt	K7932
1622 Flt	K6149
1624 Flt	L8032
'G' Flt	K7928
'K' Flt	L7619
'X' Flt Abadan	K7989
'X' Flt Amman	N5777
1 School of Army Co-op	N5636
2AACU	N2308/JQ-M
2 FTS	K8040
3 FTS	K8052
4 FTS	K7907
5 FTS	K8052
5 (P) AFU	K7927
6 FTS	K8052
7 FTS	K8040
9 FTS	N6131
10 FTS	K8040
10 (O) AFU	K8046
12 Gp Pool	K7943
13 Gp Comm Flt	K6132
CFS	K7908
5 OTU	K7970
6 OTU	K8027
8 OTU	K8041
26 AACU	K8033
29 Gp Comm Flt	K8049
41 OTU	N5636
60 OTU	K8045
61 OTU	L8032
201 Gp Comm Flt	K7936
A&AEE	K8049
Air Fighting Dev Unit	N5625
Aircraft Gun Mounting Est	K8040
Free French Flt 'Alsace'	K7937
RAE Air Defence Flt	
RAE	K7919
RHAF Trg Sqn, Aqir	K7932
Telecomms Fg Unit	K7898
Trg Pilots Ferry Pool	K8015
Western Desert Comm Flt	K7965

Other Units

Ftr Flt Hatston	nil	N5509	Nov 39
Stn Flt Henstridge	nil	N2273	Aug-Oct 43
Stn Flt St Merryn	nil	N2297	
Stn Flt Crail	nil	K7979	May-Jun 43
Stn Flt Inskip	9A	K8052/9A	Jul 43
Comm Flt Coimbatore	nil	N5546	

Those using the Gladiator were No. 1401 Flight at Bircham Newton, 1402 at Aldergrove, Northern Ireland, and 1403 at Mildenhall and each of these was later elevated to squadron status.

PAGE 26 GLOSTER GLADIATOR WARPAINT

Overseas too the Gladiator found employment in the same role, especially in Africa, and a total of nine Flights used the Gladiator at one time or another; details of all these may be found in the squadron and unit

details on this page.

Several communications squadrons and units held one or two Gladiators on strength as did several army co-operation squadrons in the months following Dunkirk, one or two



serving with Nos. 16 and 239 Squadrons.

THE SEA GLADIATOR

During the mid-1930s the standard single seat Fleet fighter, the elegant Hawker Nimrod was reaching obsolescence and urgently in need of replacement. One option being developed was under specification O8/38 which led to the Fulmar whilst Blackburn's Skua was suffering problems during development and was multi-role in that it could also perform the dive bombing task.

Because of the urgent need for a Fleet fighter eyes fell on the RAF's latest fighter, the Gladiator which was seen as being suitable for service at sea. The first order was placed by the Air Ministry in March 1938 and the first batch of 38 aircraft were modified on the production line as Sea Gladiators (Interim). These were 'navalised' by having parts of the structure altered or strengthened, were equipped with a new air speed indicator, a TR 9 radio and were fitted with arrestor hooks.

The first aircraft were delivered during December 1938, going to RNAS Worthy Down, Hampshire for instructor training; others were issued to various Naval Air Stations and storage units. Further negotiations resulted in the main production contract for a batch of 60 being signed in June 1938 and these were completed to full Admiralty Sea Gladiator Specification, F.26/37. In addition to the 'Interim' modifications, they included link chutes for expended shell cases, a ventral dinghy stowage and catapult points. Final clearance for firing the fuselage guns was eventually issued on 19 April 1939.

Sea trials were conducted on *HMS Courageous* during March though the Sea Gladiator entered RN squadron service with No. 801 Squadron on 28 February 1939. No. 801 was, however, shore based only spending brief periods embarked as its main role was deck landing training (DLT) for which it had six of the new Sea Gladiators (Interim) and four Skuas. At the end of May it was renumbered as No. 769 Squadron, No. 802 Squadron which had re-equipped the same month was, however, embarked in *HMS Glorious* and at that time was the only operational Sea Gladiator unit in the Royal Navy.

NORWEGIAN ACTION

At the declaration of war, the RN fielded a total of 54 Sea Gladiators, but only nine were at sea with 802 Squadron in *Glorious* which moved into the Indian Ocean on trade protection duties.

Luftwaffe interest in the Fleet anchorage at Scapa Flow resulted in the forming of 804 Squadron at Hatston at the beginning of December. These had occasional contacts with the enemy but 804's first success did not come until 10 April 1940. That evening several sections of Sea Gladiators scrambled and the CO hit one which was claimed destroyed, other aircraft damaged a second.

Sea Gladiators were also embarked in *HMS Glorious* when she took No. 263's

This Gladiator Mk.I of No. 80 Squadron shows the underside to advantage as well as the underwing gun mountings

Gladiators to Norway on 22 April. These too found action off Norway and Nos. 802 and 804 Squadrons were kept busy defending the Fleet from the Luftwaffe.

On 27 April Sea Gladiators provided fighter cover over Aandalsnes for the evacuation and three from 804 Squadron and one from 802 caught an He 111 of 1 (F) 122 low down 20 miles from the Fleet resulting in the Heinkel crash landing near Trondheim.

With the evacuation of central Norway almost complete by 1 May, Luftwaffe efforts intensified to locate the Fleet resulting in a busy day for the Sea Gladiators. Sections intercepted several inbound raids, and 802's 'Blue' section from *Glorious* shot down a Junkers Ju 87R of 2/StG 1. Following the evacuation the Fleet withdrew to Scapa Flow.

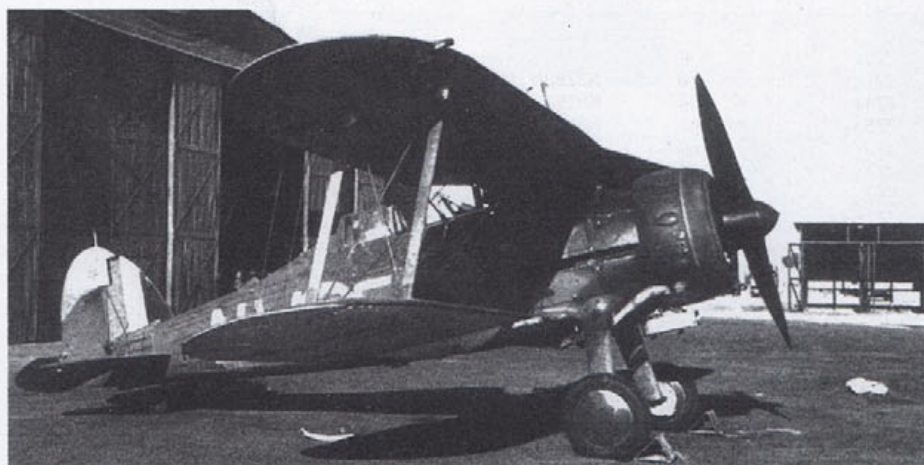
On 14 May *HMS Furious* which had embarked six aircraft of No. 804 sailed with *Glorious* and 802 Squadron to ferry RAF fighters for the Narvik expedition. The ships remained in the area and on 28 May, 802's Sea Gladiators from *Glorious* shot down a He 115 of 2/KuFlGr 506 which broke up on hitting the water. On 8 June as related earlier, the ship was sunk and all of 802 Squadron perished.

MEDITERRANEAN FLEET

On 16 June 1940 soon after the Hal Far Flight went into action in Malta, a Naval equivalent formed. *HMS Eagle* lacked any fighters so four Sea Gladiators (N5512,



Above: By the time war broke out in the desert the fins of the Gladiators of No. 80 Squadron were striped as can be seen on K7982:YK-K at Ismailia. Below: The first Gladiators in action in the desert belonged to No. 33 Squadron but the unit was later withdrawn for re-equipment and its aircraft like 'NW-E', shown here at Helwan in October 1940, were passed onto No. 3 Squadron RAAF.





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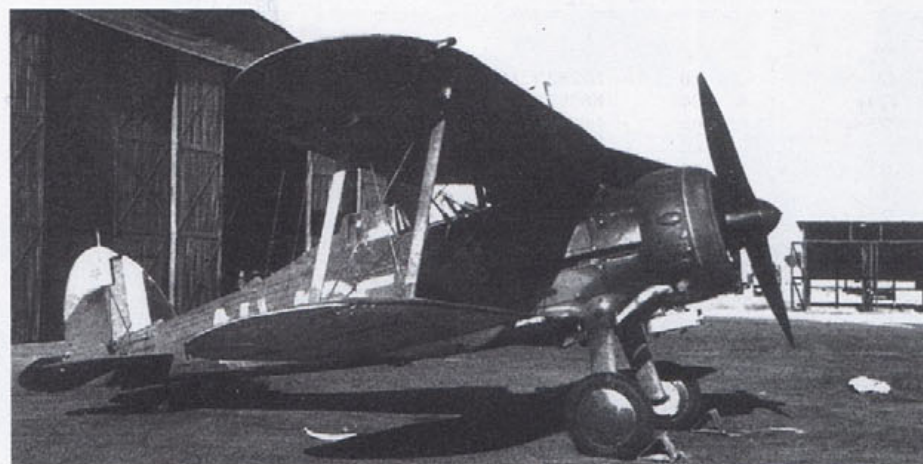
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Above: By the time war broke out in the desert the fins of the Gladiators of No. 80 Squadron were striped as can be seen on K7982:YK-K at Ismailia. Below: The first Gladiators in action in the desert belonged to No. 33 Squadron but the unit was later withdrawn for re-equipment and its aircraft like 'NW-E', shown here at Helwan in October 1940, were passed onto No. 3 Squadron RAAF.



N5513, N5517 and N5567) were issued and the Fighter Flight formed, led by *Eagle's* Cdr (Flying), Cdr Keighly-Peach. He selected and trained several Swordfish pilots in fighter tactics to counter any Italian air attacks.

When the Mediterranean Fleet was located by an Italian flying boat on 11 July air attacks soon began, though initially the Sea Gladiators did not have any success. Later in the day, however, Keighly-Peach (in N5517:6-A) and Lt Keith dived on five SM.79s. The one attacked by 'K-P' spun into the sea. More action came two days later when the Fleet was south of Crete. *Eagle* launched the Sea Gladiators and a lone SM.79 was attacked and shot down whilst a second Savoia fell to the Flight later in the day. Another patrol destroyed an SM.81 to end a very successful day whilst on 29 July another SM.79 was shot down by the Sea Gladiators.

When the ships came under heavy air attack following a Fleet bombardment of Bardia on 17 August, *Eagle's* Sea Gladiators, which had flown ashore to Sidi Barrani attacked an SM.79 over the Fleet from which only one man baled out. Other pilots shared a Savoia with one of No.112's Gladiators. Italian losses were heavy with four destroyed and eight damaged by the defences.

Off Crete at the end of the month Sea Gladiators found a Cant Z.506B which was shot down into the sea. The arrival of *HMS Illustrious* with a compliment of Fulmars then eased the pressure on *Eagle's* Flight.

To support 806 Squadron, whilst two heavily escorted convoys sailed for Malta, *Illustrious* embarked two of *Eagle's* Sea Gladiators. These soon found action when

The Gladiator Mk.IIs of No. 112 Squadron saw sporadic action over the desert during 1940, N5829:RT-Z was one and it later moved with the squadron to Greece.

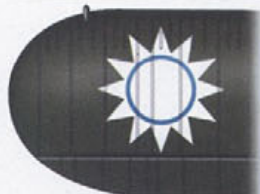


Above: No. 3 Squadron RAAF took its Gladiators into action in December 1940, this unidentified one showing the somewhat battered appearance they soon acquired. Below: From Aden the Gladiators of No. 94 Squadron, like 'GO-D' saw action against Italian bombers raiding the port as well when they mounted attacks on Italian East Africa





Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, 2906, Nationalist Chinese Air Force, 1937. Dark Green overall; Blue and White striped rudder; national markings above port top wing and below starboard lower wing only

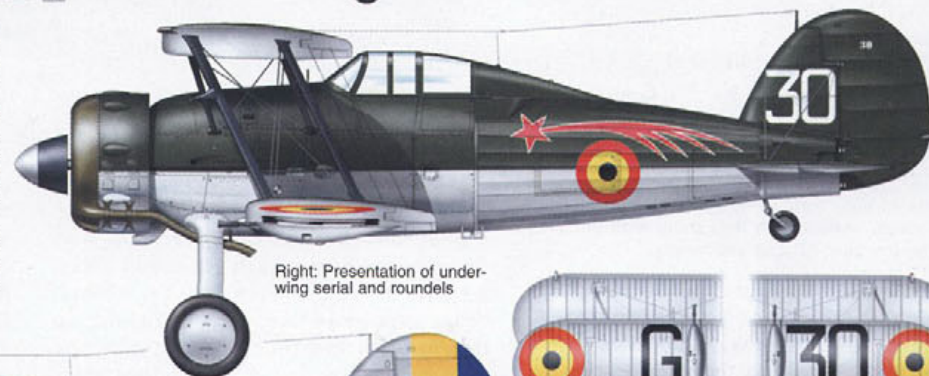


Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, 2909, Nationalist Chinese Air Force, 1937. Dark Green overall; Blue and White striped rudder; national markings above port top wing and below starboard lower wing

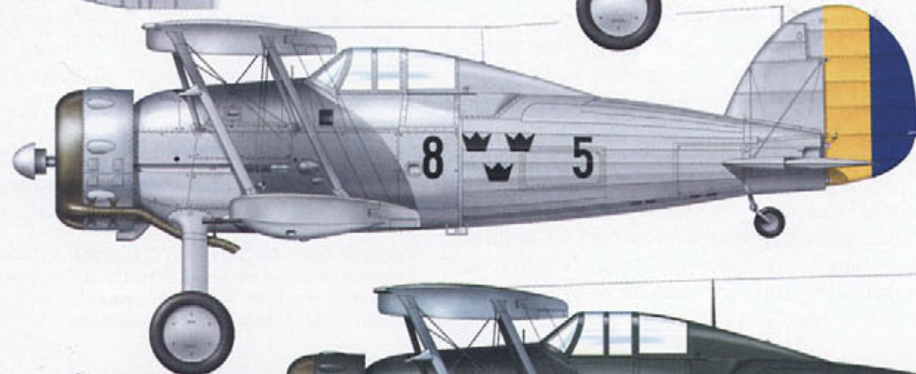
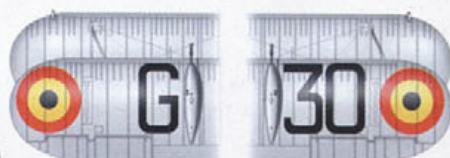


Left: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, 175, Latvian Air Force, 1937. Dark Olive Green on upper surfaces (with a distinct sheen), silver on the rest of the airframe. National markings in six positions, those on top of wings without white backing; '175' in black outlined white. Note highly polished spinner

Right: Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, G.30, 1 Escadrille (les Comètes), 1 Groupe Belge Air Force, Schaffen, 1938. Dark Green upper surfaces; Aluminium doped undersides. Roundels in standard six positions

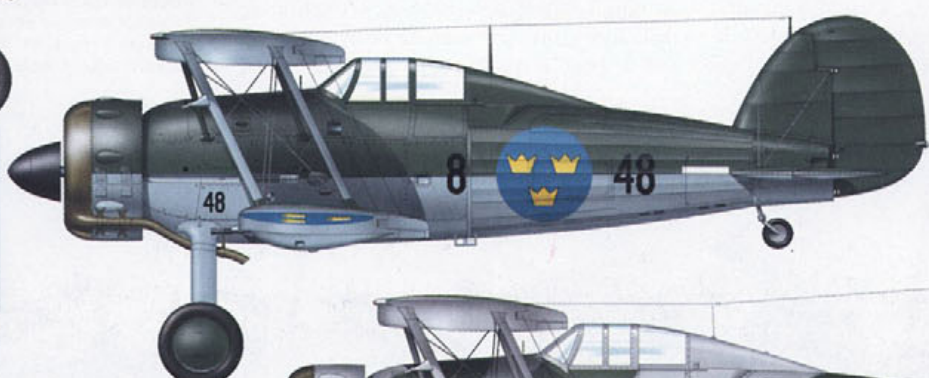


Right: Presentation of under-wing serial and roundels



Left: Gloster Gladiator J-8, F8, Royal Swedish Air Force, 1938. Standard 'silver' scheme. Yellow and Blue rudder; note this is one of the early machines delivered with three-bladed metal propeller. Scrap view (far left) shows early wing markings

Left: Gloster Gladiator J8, 8-48, F8, Swedish Air Force, 1937. Dark Green and Light Blue scheme. Roundels in six positions (see scrap views for wings). All numbers in black; codes other side also read 8-48. Note recognition pennant in white ahead of tailplane



Gloster Gladiator J-8A, Flygflottilj F19, Swedish Volunteer Force, Northern Finland, winter 1939-40. Aluminium paint overall with irregular dark green patches over top surfaces. No wing markings (above or below). '13' just aft of fuselage skull marking refers to pilot's kills



These Gladiator Mk.IIs, dispersed on a strip in Kenya in July 1940, belong to 'C' Flight No. 1 Squadron SAAF which flew them with success during the East African campaign.

two pilots of 806 Squadron, found and shot down a Cant Z. 501 of 186 Squadriglia.

However, with Malta and the carriers a thorn in the Axis side, the Luftwaffe took a hand and on 10 January 1941 made a devastating attack on *Illustrious* which limped into Malta for emergency repairs. The survivors of 806 Squadron were flown ashore to aid in the island's defence. It was one of their Sea Gladiators that made the type's final claim over Malta when on 24 January S/Lt Sewell spotted a Ju 88 diving toward Hal Far and he shot it down off the coast. It was his fifth confirmed victory.

EXPORTS

Throughout the years between the wars Glosters had found small but useful export sales for its fighters. Following the takeover of Glosters by Hawker Aircraft Ltd the latter's greater experience in export sales was soon to bear fruit for the new fighter. Many went to countries which already had a happy business relationship with Hawkers and thus there was soon a thriving export market for the Gladiator.

Many came from aircraft ordered against RAF contracts detailed in the appendices, but as the RAF replaced its own Gladiators, so some nations received second-hand machines either by purchase or by donation. Other Gladiators were to serve in some

unlikely guises as a result of capture during the war and the service of these aircraft and all other foreign Gladiators follows:

Belgium

During the inter-war years the Belgian Aeronautique Militaire had flown a variety of British aircraft and in 1937 placed an order for 22 Gladiator Is with Glosters. The first six pilots were trained at Hucclecote and wearing SBAC registrations the Gladiators were delivered in September and a further nine were delivered over the next few months. The balance of seven aircraft

Gladiator Mk.II N5821 of No 1 Squadron, SAAF taxis for another sortie against the Italians over Eritrea in early 1941. It later served in the area on meteorological reconnaissance duties.



The shattered remains of this Gladiator Mk.I of either Nos. 33 or 80 Squadrons at Capuzzo in 1940 shows the internal structure of the wings well.

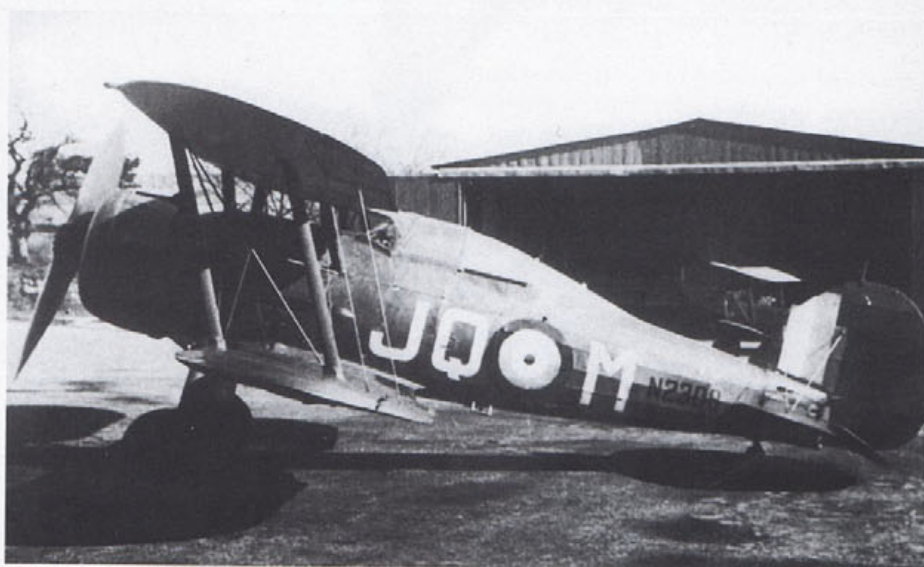
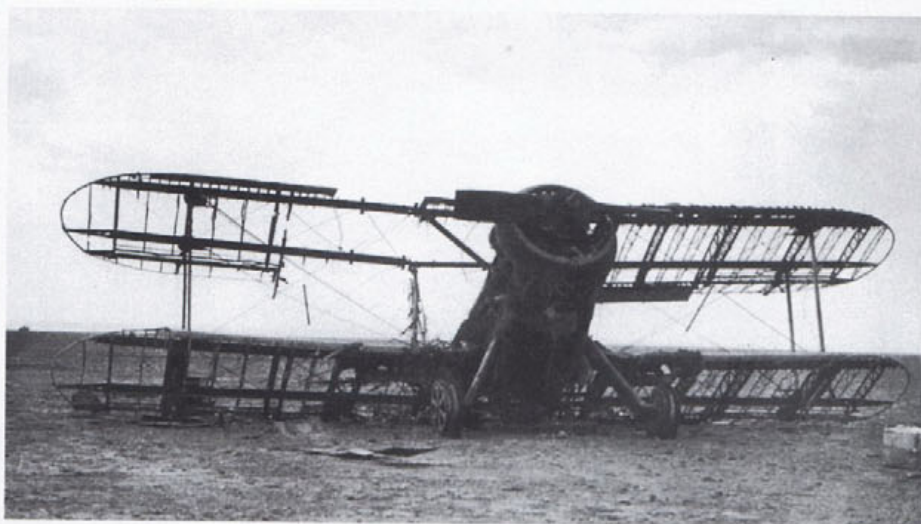
were assembled by SABCA in Belgium but plans for licence production were abandoned after lengthy negotiations.

The new fighters carrying the serials G-17 to G-38 were issued to the 1st Escadrille de Chasse of the 1st Groupe of the 2nd (Fighter Regiment), abbreviated as Esc 1/12, the Escadrille's aircraft carrying the flaming comet marking of its nickname 'Le Comete'. Training began immediately and by mid-1938 the Escadrille was operational.

Although two aircraft were lost in a mid-air collision on 14 March 1939, the remainder were on strength when war in Europe broke out the following September. Although Belgium remained neutral, the Aeronautique Militaire was mobilised and began border patrols but during one such sortie on 9 September, G-17 crashed near Wevelghem with the loss of its pilot. Patrols continued through the winter with the Gladiators making occasional contact with aircraft of the combatants. There were, however, further losses with four Gladiators being written off in crashes during March. April saw Esc 1/12 conduct several interceptions and on the 20th they chased a damaged He 111 out of Belgian airspace.

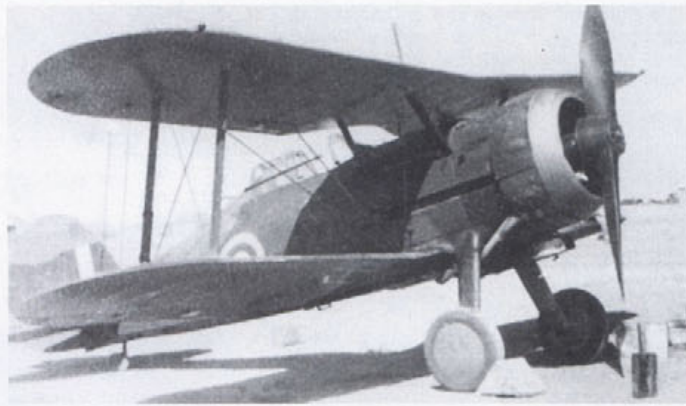
When the German blitzkrieg began on 10 May, 15 Gladiators remained in service at Schaffen, though two were undergoing

After retiring from front line work in the UK, many Gladiators were employed on various second line tasks. N2308:JQ-M was one which is seen with No 2 AACU at Roborough, near Plymouth, during early 1941 having been handed over from No. 247 Squadron.





Above: This rare view of a Gladiator in Type C markings is of N2309:B which in 1942 was being used for met recce duties by No 1401 Flight at Bircham Newton. Above right: Another unit to fly on met duties was the Met Flt at Summit in the Sudan which used this Gladiator Mk.I for its 'ascents' in 1942.



repair. The commander of Esc 1/1/2 led the Gladiators away just before Schaffén was hit by low-flying He 111s and Do 17s and most arrived safely at Beauvechain. One however had collided with a burning Hurricane and crashed though the pilot escaped. From there five later took off and in a one sided combat with Bf 109s of I/JG 26 and 3/JG 27 three were quickly lost.

Other Gladiators later found a formation of Ju 87 Stukas, but the escorting Bf 109s intervened and two more were shot down though the remainder escaped into cloud. Six Gladiators, believed to have been the only ones available, the following morning escorted Belgian Fairey Battles in an attack on the bridges over the Albert Canal. The first section was led by Esc 1/1/2's commander in G-27 whilst 1/Sgt Rolin in G-22 led the second. They were intercepted over

Photos of the Gladiators of No. 263 Squadron during their two expeditions to Norway are scarce. One of the best known shows this one hastily camouflaged at Lake Lesjakog in May 1940. In the background is a Royal Navy Skua.



the target by I/JG 1's Bf 109s and in the ensuing dogfight Rolin believed that he damaged one of the Messerschmitts before he was shot down. Another one was damaged by the pilot of G-32 but Gladiators G-19 and G-34 were, along with the CO's G-27, shot down with the loss of the three pilots. It was virtually the end for the Belgian Gladiators as later that day the few survivors, which included G-38, were destroyed by strafing Bf 109s at Beauvechain.

At Eastleigh, Nairobi, No 1414 (Met) Flt used this aircraft, K7913 for weather ascents until it force landed after taking off on 19 May 1943.

China

In October 1937 whilst the Sino-Japanese War was at its height the Chinese Central Government ordered 36 Gladiator Is fitted with Vickers Mk V machine guns from Glosters.

Accompanied by a Gloster working party, the first 20 arrived in Hong Kong from late November from where the crated aircraft



Preserved Gladiators

- K8042** Mk I. Static. RAF Museum Hendon in pre war markings of No. 87 Squadron.
- L8032** Mk II. Airworthy. G-AMRK preserved at Shuttleworth Collection in Norwegian Army Air Service markings.
- N5519** Sea Gladiator. Static. Fuselage only. Preserved as N5520 'Faith' and displayed at Palace Armoury Museum, Valletta, Malta.
- N5579** Mk II. Static. Ex No. 263 Squadron. Remains recovered from Lake Lesjakog. Planned for display in Armed Forces Museum, Oslo after restoration.
- N5589** Mk II. Static. Ex No. 263 Squadron. Remains recovered from Lake Lesjakog. For RAF. Current fate not known
- N5628** Mk II. Static. Ex No. 263 Squadron. Displayed in RAF Museum. Remains recovered from Lake Lesjakog and displayed 'as is'.
- N5541** Mk II. Static. Ex No. 263 Squadron. Recovered from Lake Lesjakog and displayed as 'HE-G' in RNoAF Museum, Gardermoen.
- N5903** Mk II. Airworthy. G-GLAD. Restoration to flying condition for The Fighter Collection, Duxford. Formerly in the FAA Museum, Yeovilton.
- 278** J-8A. Static. Ex Swedish Air Force. Displayed in RSwedAF Historic Collection in Winter War markings of Flyflott 19.



Above: On 14 May 1937 the pilots of No. 65 Squadron collected their aircraft, including K7939 and K7940 direct from Glosters at Brockworth. Below: The serial of this Gladiator I is overpainted but its codes show the ownership of No. 615 Squadron at Vitry in France, early 1940. It wears a non-standard fuselage roundel.



were moved to Guangzhou and by January 1938 they had been erected and tested. This batch were numbered 5701-5720 but were identified by the unit number and aircraft code. Two squadrons of the 5th Pursuit Group at Gunzhou, the 28th and 29th were equipped whilst the second batch of 16 aircraft, 5721-5736, having been delivered in January 1938 were also given to these squadrons. Later, 32nd PS of the 3rd PG also received Gladiators.

Thus it was in China that the Gladiator had its combat debut when on the morning of 24 February a formation of Imperial Japanese Navy E-8N floatplanes escorted by A-5M fighters were intercepted near Nanking. Three Gladiators from the 28th and nine from the 29th PS scrambled and dived on the unsuspecting Japanese. Two of the A-5Ms were damaged and another fell to Capt Wong Sun-Shui who thus claimed the Gladiator's first victim. A second was also believed shot down, but it was not all that one sided as two of the Gladiators were also lost.

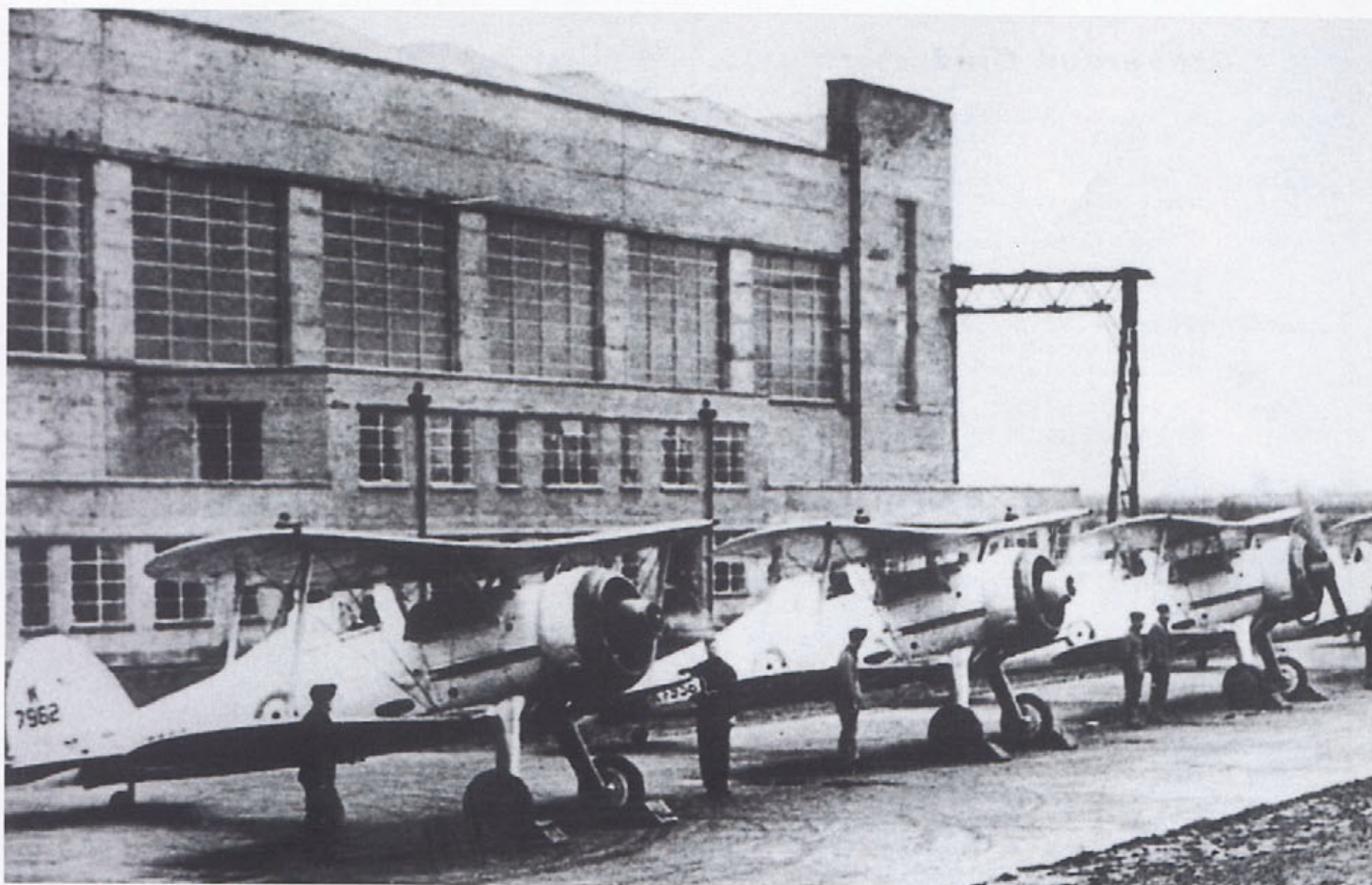
After several scrambles on succeeding days there was a lull until 13 April. That morning eight D-1A dive-bombers escorted by nine A-4Ns and eight A-5Ns from the carrier *Kaga* attacked Canton. Eighteen Gladiators took off to intercept and in a diving attack the leader shot down a D-1A in flames before the escort intervened. He downed an A-4N which also went down into the Pearl River before having to bale out having been hit by an A-5M. The battle had lasted 40 minutes following which the Chinese Gladiator pilots claimed nine destroyed for the loss of four.

Action for the decreasing number of Gladiators came next on 31 May. As nine E-8Ns approached Hukou five Gladiators launched in response and in a lengthy fight, two E-8Ns went down for no loss.



Above: This unknown pilot of No. 607 Squadron shows the depth of snow in this dispersal at Vitry in early 1940. Below: The ground crew in the background admire their work having just assembled No. 112 Squadron's first Gladiator Mk. I at Helwan, Egypt, in June 1939





Japanese air attacks increased during the summer and on 16 June six G-3M twin engined bombers attacked Nanking. The Commander of the 5th PG Major John Wong Pan-Yang scrambled from Xiaoquan at the head of eight Gladiators. Pulling up under the leading 'Nell', Major Wong hit the external bomb-load which detonated turning the

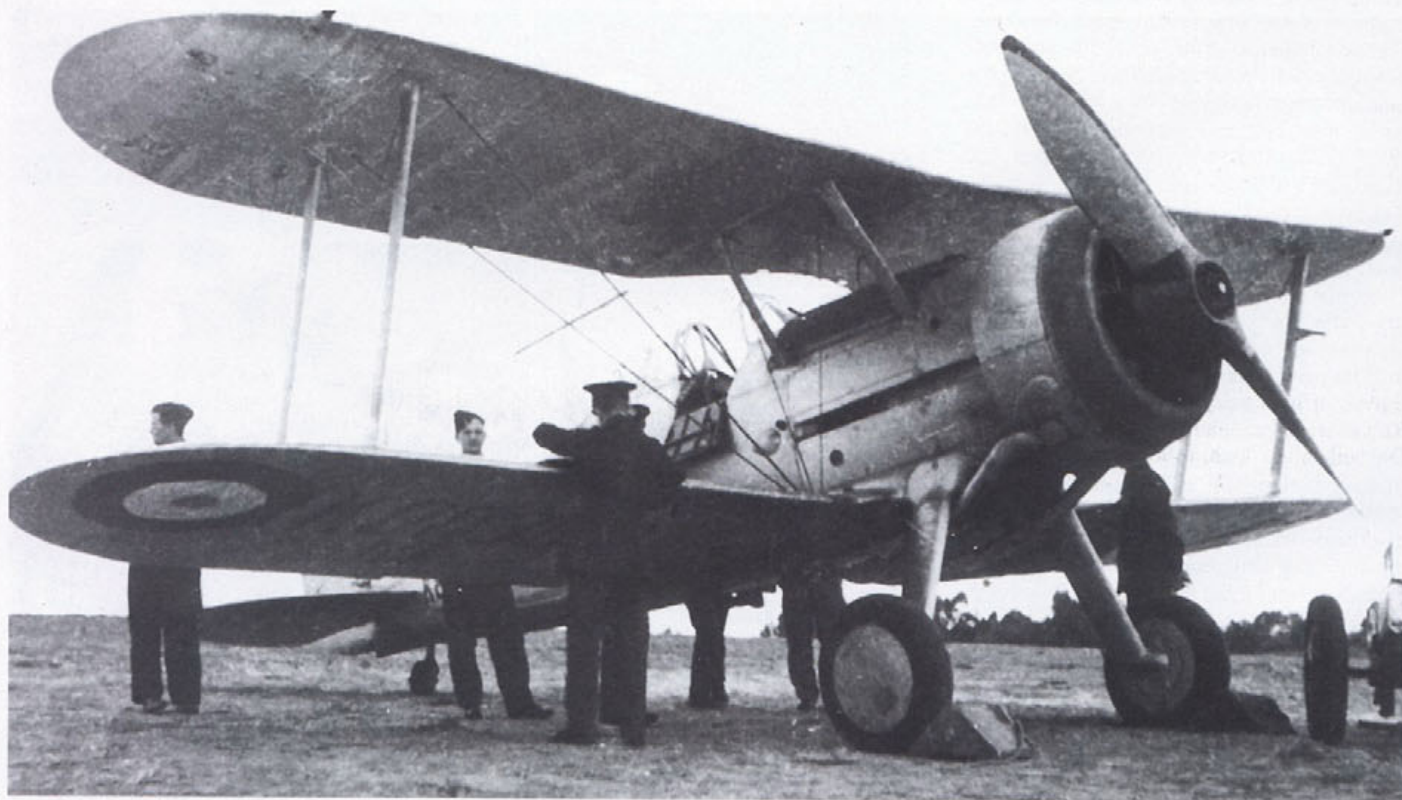
Gladiator Mk.I K8030 was one of those delivered to No. 25 Squadron at Hawkinge in 1938 as interim equipment pending the arrival of Blenheim 1s later in the year.

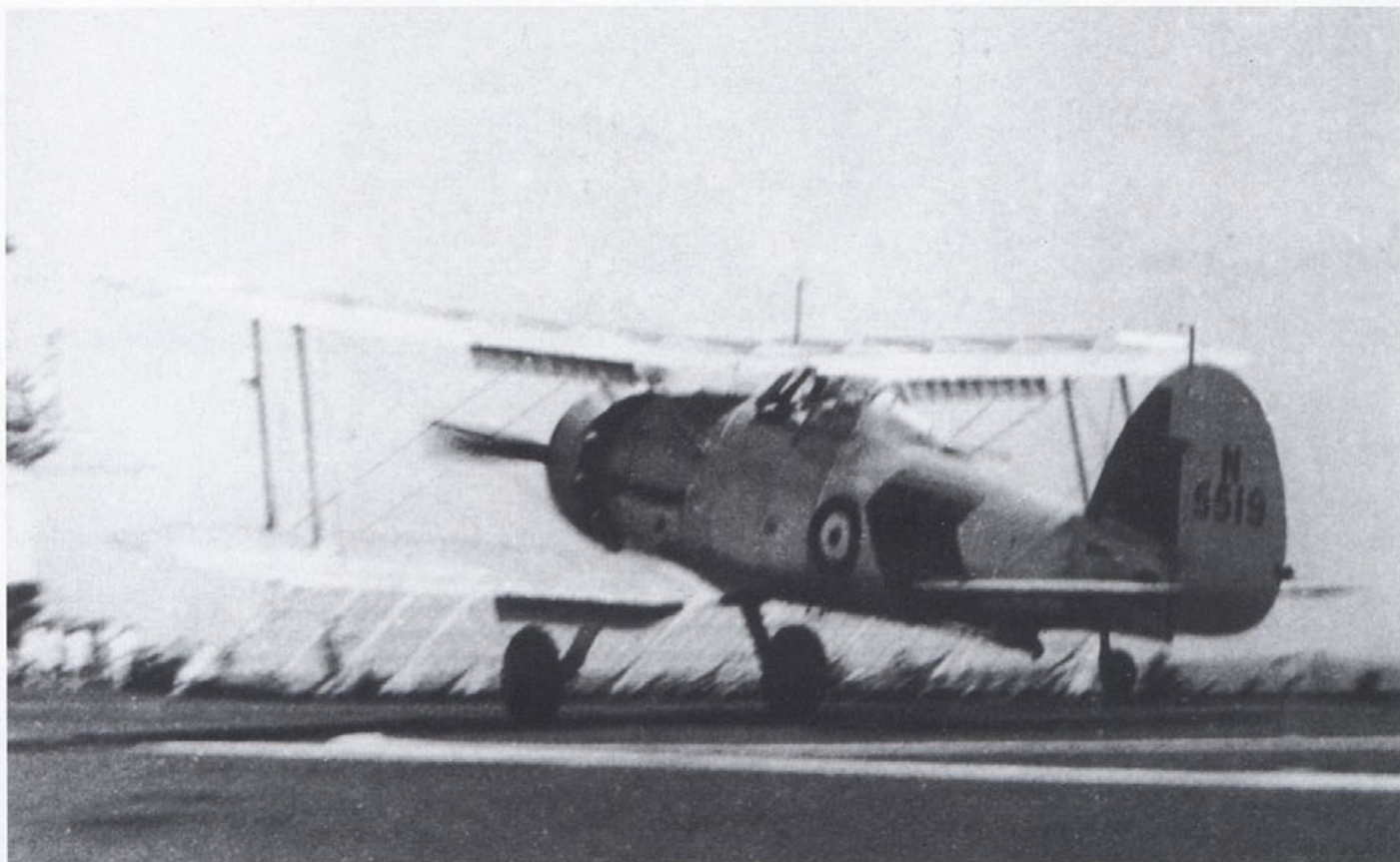
bomber into a fireball that then crashed. Another two fell as did two of the fighters.

In spite of occasional notable successes, the Gladiators found it difficult holding their own with the A-5M monoplanes. This fact and a lack of spares saw them relegated to training duties. But before this on 3 August they took part in one of the biggest air battles over China when 18 G-3Ms with a large escort headed for Hankow. Over 50 fighters scrambled to defend the city, including 11 Gladiators some of which attacked the A-

5Ms. One blew an A-5M out of the sky, but others were hotly engaged. Capt Yim-Qun's aircraft was badly damaged though he shot his attacker down but the losses left just nine Gladiators available. Later in the month these were transferred to the 32nd PS.

On the 30th more bombers raided Hankow and the nine Gladiators took off. By the time they were airborne the D-1A dive bombers were heading home but more headed for Nanking. There the Gladiators engaged a division of 11 D-1As and escort of A-5Ms





Sea Gladiator N5519:G6A of 802 Squadron catches the wire as it lands on *HMS Glorious* in July 1939. It later became famous as one of the Malta aircraft.



Sweden where it had been assembled. Over Hanko it encountered a formation of Soviet I-153 Chaika fighters and one was shot down. Soon afterwards, a Danish volunteer pilot with LeLv 26, scrambled and shot down a DB-3 bomber. In this combat Sgt Tuominen, in GL-258, who became the leading Finnish Gladiator ace also claimed a victim when he shot down one of the escorting Polikarpov I-16s.

Later, nine Gladiators moved to cover northern Lake Ladoga, with others moving to cover the north east of the country. Claims by Finnish Gladiator pilots came at a steady pace with an I-16 and two SB-2 bombers

Left: Seen at Shallufa, Egypt, alongside a Buffalo, this anonymous Sea Gladiator belonged to 805 Squadron which was a short lived shore based unit.

neighbour. The plight of the Finns received much sympathy and support from around the world, but the Finnish Air Force desperately needed additional aircraft to fight the Soviets. Thus in mid-December a contract for 30 ex-RAF Gladiator IIs was placed, 20 of which were purchased, the rest donated. The first three were delivered to Lentolaivue 26 (LeLv 26) on 18 January 1940 with the rest arriving the following month.

LeLv 26 trained on its Gladiators at Utti, its two Flights tasked with the protection of the Kouvola junction. The Gladiator's first action in Finnish colours came whilst on a ferrying sortie on 2 February when GL-263, flown by Lt Berg, was being delivered from

Right: The first aircraft of the main production batch was N5500 which served with 801 Squadron which in May 1939 became No 769 for deck landing training.



being brought down in its next two contacts, the second of which was on 12 February. The claims were at the cost of the first Gladiator to be lost when GL-251 fell to the escort.

When the more modern Fiat G.50 began supplanting Gladiators in LeLv 26's 3rd Flight the biplanes began to be passed to LeLv 12 and 14 in the army co-operation role. The former operated mainly over the Bay of Viipuri and the latter over the Karelian Isthmus. The next day, 13 February was, however, the Gladiator's most successful over Finland. Several Soviet formations were active over the front and in the afternoon, LeLv 26 Gladiators attacked the I-15 escort to nine SB-2 bombers. Three of the I-15s fell as did one of the Gladiators. Two other Gladiators returning from a patrol then met the bombers, which were now without escort and four were shot down, three by Tuominen. Later in the day he also shot down an R-5 reconnaissance biplane to become the first Finnish Gladiator 'ace'.

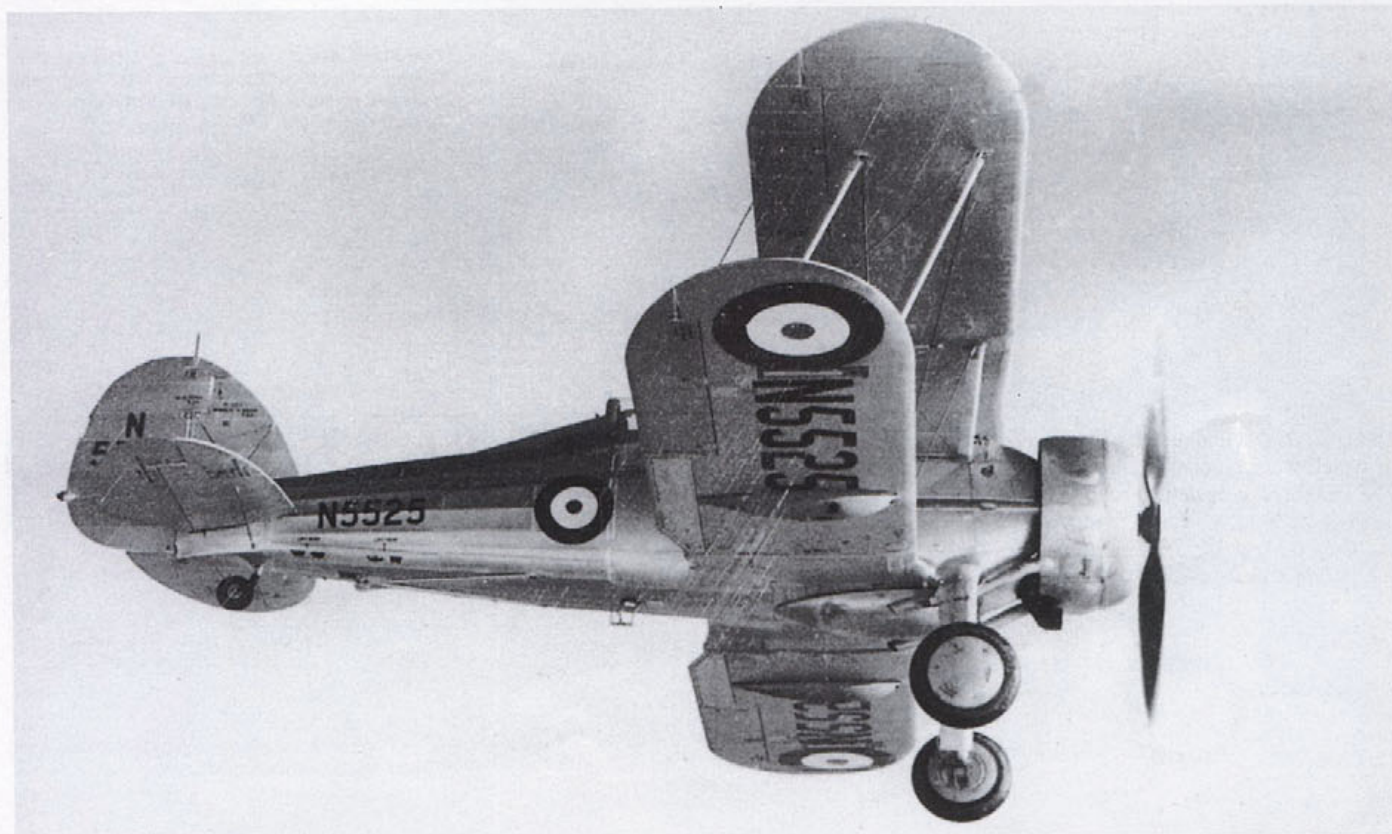
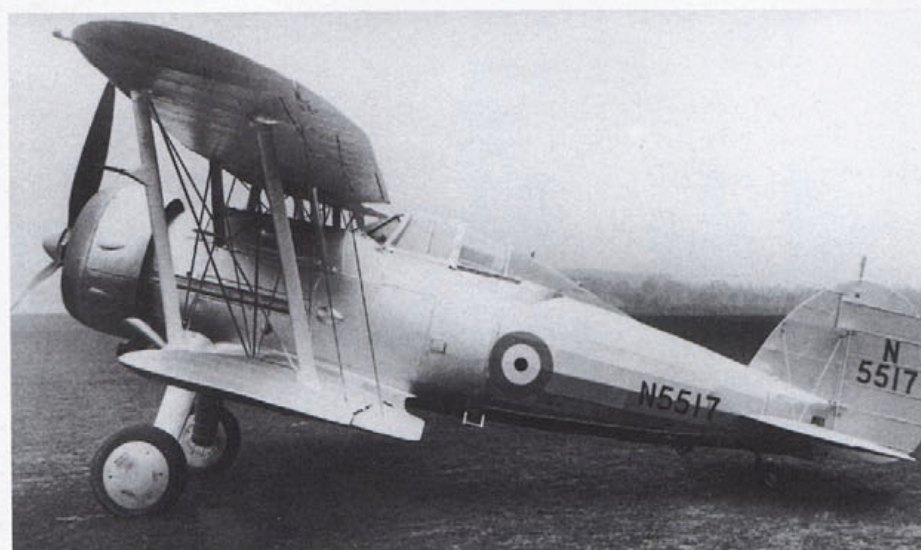
The day also saw LeLv 14's 2nd Flight receive its first Gladiators and it spent the rest of February in training. However, on the 14th LeLv 12's 1st Flight began operations as the Gladiators had replaced its elderly Fokker C Vs.

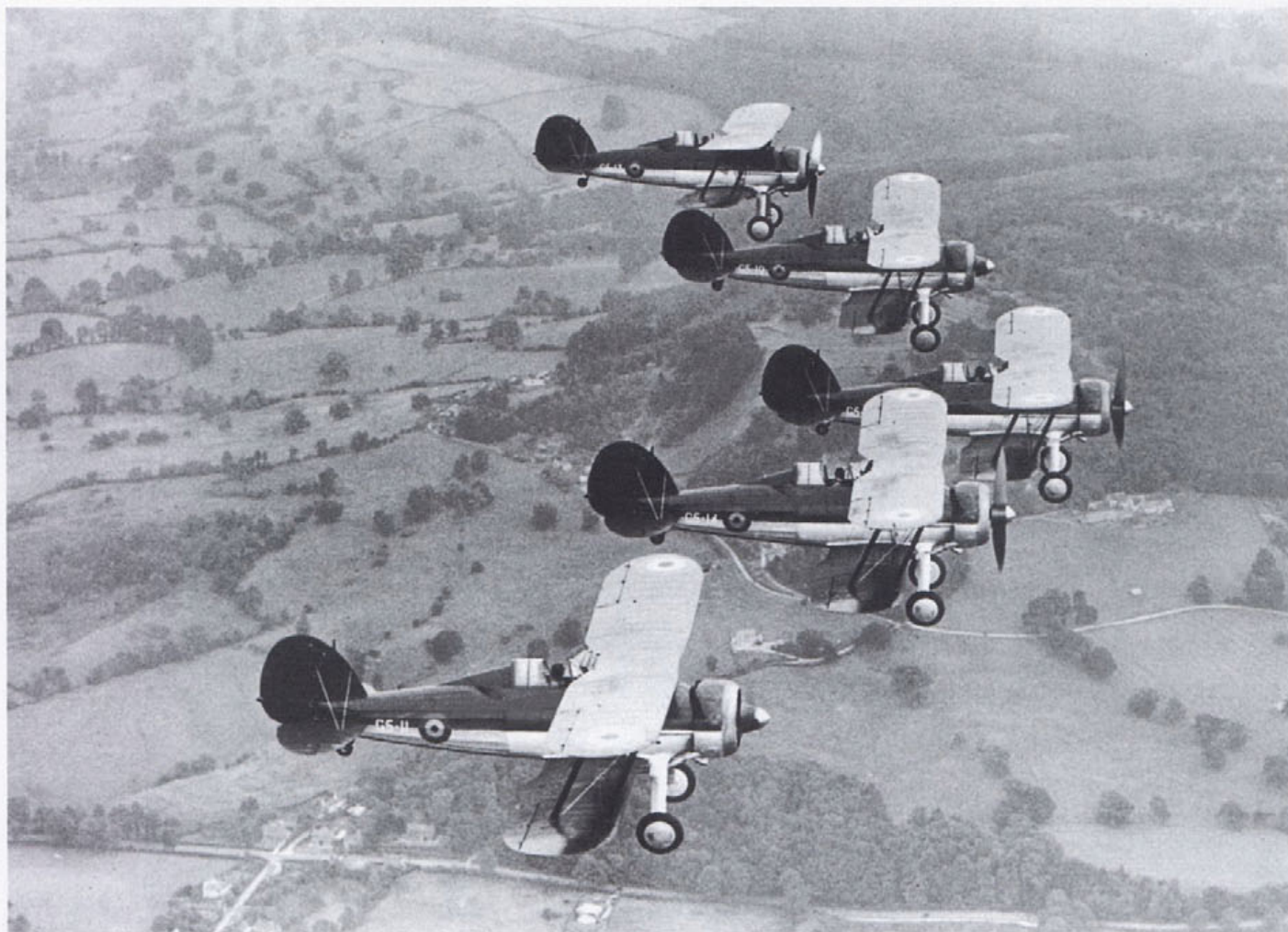
A couple of days later a patrol attacked a formation of nine DB-3s one of which was brought down with the Gladiators shooting down several more Soviets over the next few days, though there were several losses too. The Gladiators were, however, already being supplanted in LeLv 26 or delegated to other duties. They had one more major combat with LeLv 26, however, when on the 25th a section intercepted nine R-5s over

Below: This excellent view of Sea Gladiator N5525 shows all the main changes, including the dinghy pack under the fuselage and the arrestor hook.



Above: With everything down a Sea Gladiator makes a training approach onto a carrier, possibly HMS *Victorious*, in 1941. Below: Part of the main Sea Gladiator production batch, N5517 joined 801 Squadron in March 1939 and later served with distinction aboard HMS *Eagle* in the Mediterranean, being used by Cdr Keighly-Peach to make all his claims.





Belgian Gladiator Mk.I.s wearing their delivery registrations during a test flight. They later carried the 'flaming comet' badge of 2me Escadrille

Karelia shooting down four. The Soviet escort then intervened and two Gladiators were shot down. That the biplanes were out-classed was brutally brought home when five more were shot down in two combats on 29 February with three pilots killed. One I-16 fell in return which was LeLv 26's final claim with the Gladiator which were then concentrated in the army co-operation

squadrons. With LeLv 26 the Gladiators flew over 600 sorties and claimed 30 Soviet aircraft but at the cost of 11 aircraft in combat with six pilots killed.

The Gladiator's use in the army co-operation role increased on 1 March when LeLv 12's 2nd Flight received four and on the 5th strafing Gladiators accounted for a large number of Soviet troops advancing over the frozen Gulf of Finland. The period from 4 to 8 March was particularly busy for the unit. On the 5th a LeLv 12 Gladiator brought

down an I-153 and they claimed two more on the 7th. However, on 10 March GL-279 was shot down and the pilot killed. Soon afterwards the ceasefire came into effect and the 'Winter War' ended.

This did not mean an end to the Gladiator's Finnish service, however, as it remained in use with both LeLv 12 and 14. During the

The Finns made brief use of the Gladiator for fighter duties in the Winter War and later changed to support duties, GL-278 here serving on such work with LeLv 16.





period of 'peace' the Finns received some additional aircraft when the 12 ex-F-19 Gladiators were returned. Both LeLv 12 and 14 were still flying the aging biplane when the 'Continuation War' began in concert with the German assault on the Soviet Union. By then the 1st Flight of LeLv 16 was using six Gladiators and when LeLv 12 fully re-equipped with Hawk 75s it transferred its remaining biplanes in early July. Likewise LeLv 14 also passed its Gladiators on to LeLv 16 at the same time.

LeLv 16's Gladiator Flight saw action against the Soviets through the summer, but serviceability proved to be a real problem during the winter. The Gladiators continued sporadic operations through into 1942, and by May the Flight was flying reconnaissance sorties around Lake Aaninen.

In January 1943 operations switched to the Maaselka area and there on 15 February Lt Stromberg in GL-273 shot down an R-5 for the Gladiators' only claim of the 'Continuation War'. Activity through 1943 was, however, much reduced due to the static nature of the war on the ground and this state continued into 1944. The few surviving Gladiators were concentrated into the 2nd Flight in June and these flew their final war sorties on 31 July.

On 16 August the Gladiators were finally withdrawn and replaced by the locally produced Myrsky. The survivors, GL-253, GL-270, GL-274, GL-275 and GL-276 were placed in storage in 1945 and finally struck off charge in 1950.

Germany

One of the least likely users of the Gladiator was the Luftwaffe which had captured a number of the type from the Soviet Air Force during the rapid advance through the Baltic States in the summer of 1941. The Gladiators were fitted with fixed pitch wooden airscrews and were employed by Ergänzungsgruppe (S) 1 from Langendiebach, near Hanau, during 1942-3. Erg.Gr. (S) 1 was a training Gruppe giving primary and operational training for assault

Gladiators supplied to the Royal Iraqi Air Force flew against the RAF during the brief Iraq campaign and remained in use into the 1950's.

glider pilots using a variety of types including at least 10 Gladiators. Within Erg. Gr. (S) 1 various glider towing aircraft types were used by each of the four Staffeln within the Gruppe, and known codes carried by the Gladiators include 'NJ+BO', '1E+BL', '1E+DK', '1E+JM', '1E+PH' and '1E+SH'. The Luftwaffe also allocated Werke Nos such as 45710, 45717, 45826 and 45829 to many of them.

The Gladiators arrived in 1942 wearing

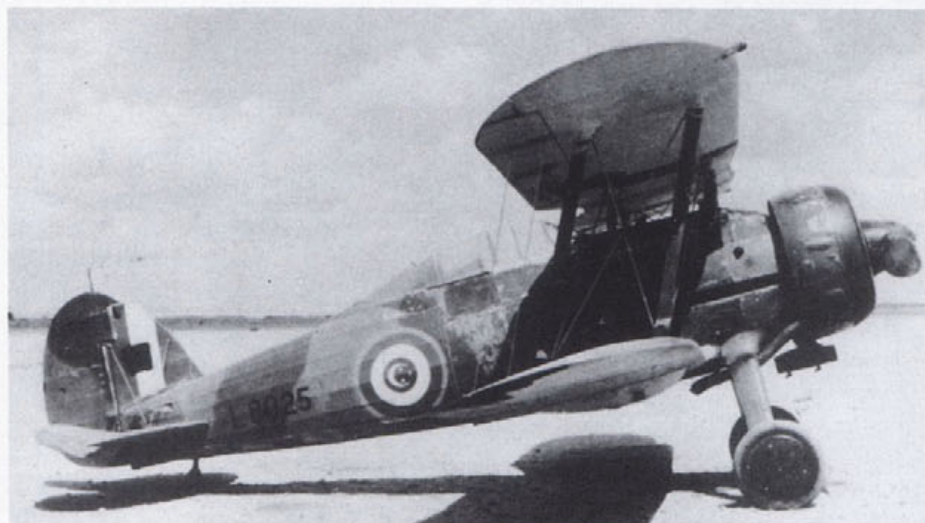
The Luftwaffe employed a number of captured Gladiators for glider towing work during 1942-3, one of them being NJ+BO.

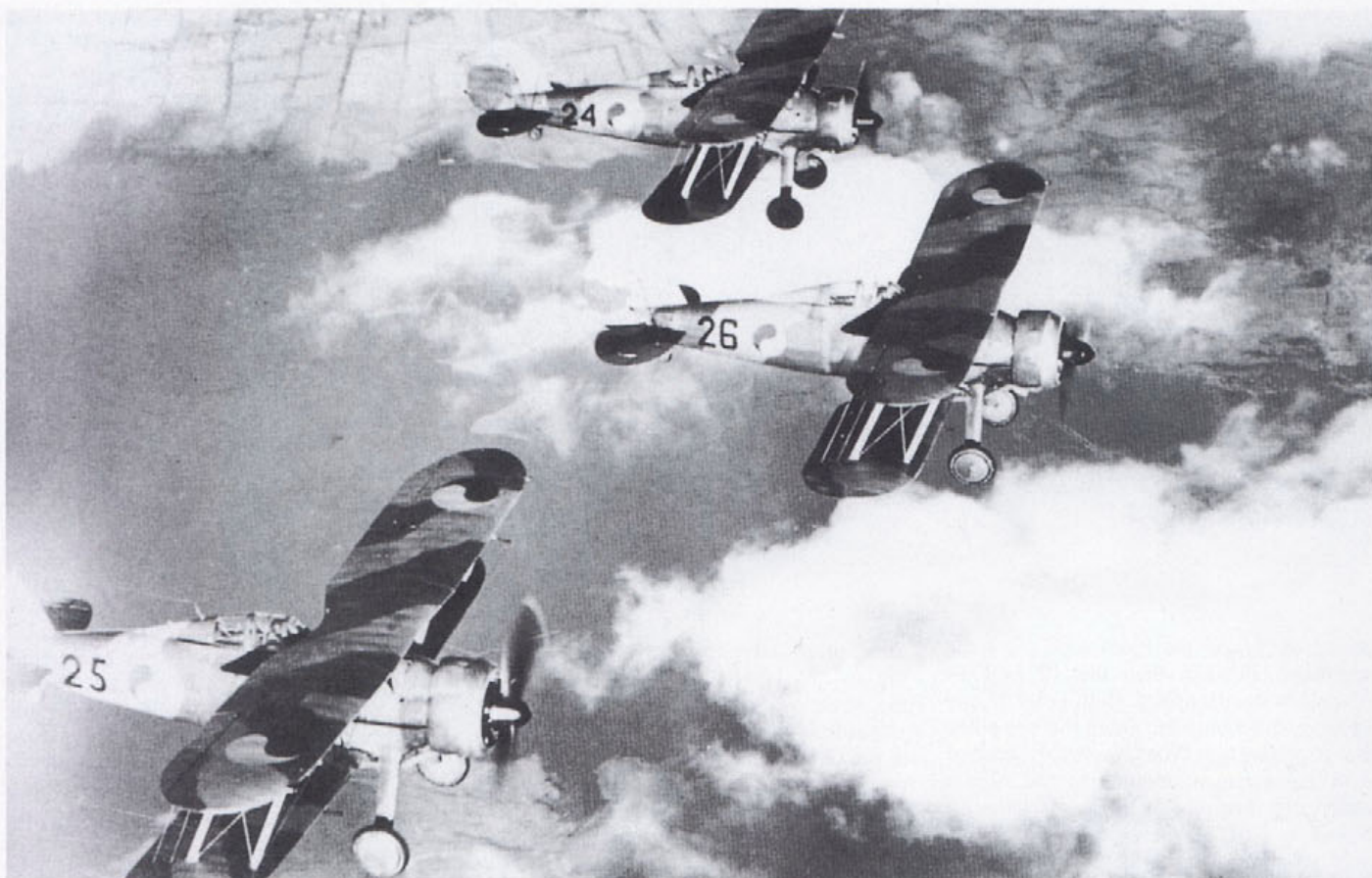
Soviet stars but beneath were red Latvian swastikas; at least two ex-Lithuanian aircraft are also thought to have been captured by the Luftwaffe in the total of 13 Gladiators listed as captured by September 1941. In Luftwaffe service four Gladiators are known to have been written off or damaged in service with Erg. Gr. (S) 1 and the survivors were authorised for deletion on 16 March 1943.

Greece

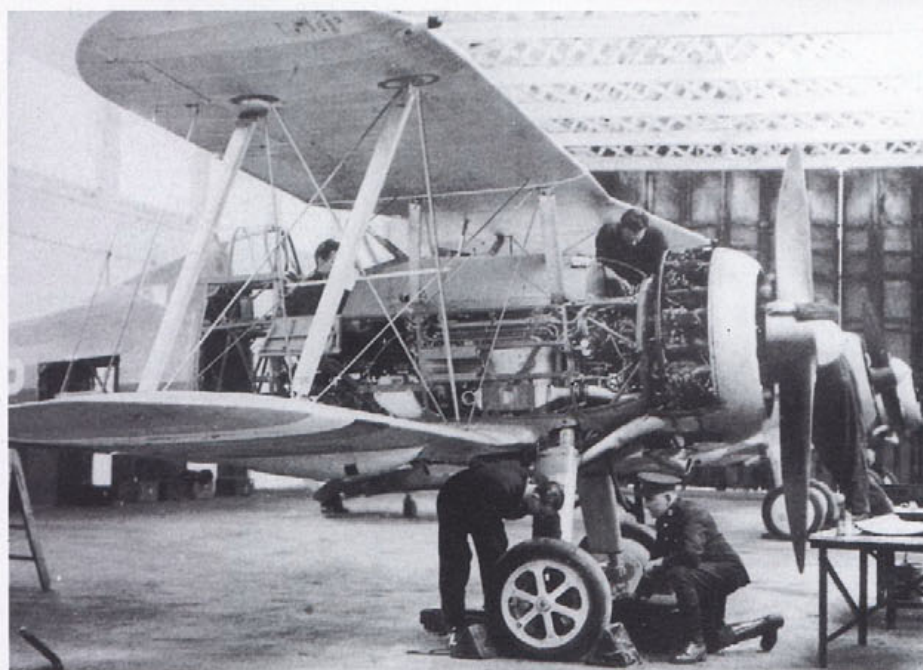
The smallest export order secured by Glosters before World War 2 came in January 1938 when Mr Zarparkis Homogenos, a Greek businessman, ordered two for which he paid £9,200! The two Mk Is carried the Greek serials Delta Epsilon (DE) 1 and 2 and these were presented to the Royal Hellenic Air Force. They were not used operationally, however, as on 2 December 14 Gladiators were transferred from the RAF to the hard pressed Greeks. They were issued to 21 Mira under Capt Kellas which withdrew to Eleusis to train on them. The unit became operational on 23 December and moved to Yannina where on 8 January 1941 claimed their first Italian air-

This Egyptian Gladiator Mk.I carries the REAF serial L8025 and is camouflaged for service in the defence of the Suez Canal in the early war years





Above: The three surviving Irish Gladiators, of No 1 Fighter Squadron formate for the camera in November 1940. Left: This interesting view of one of the Irish Gladiators shows the engine detail and fuselage gun mounting well.



craft when a CR. 42 was destroyed near Kelcyre. During their next combat on the 25th, 21 Mira claimed the destruction of a Cant Z.1007 over Salonika but the Greek Gladiator's biggest combat came on 9 February when Kellas led four Gladiators and some P-24s on patrol over the Albanian border. There they encountered 18 SM. 79s escorted by around a dozen G. 50s and 12 CR. 42s. During the engagement two fighters and two bombers were claimed destroyed, though one Gladiator was damaged and written off. Over the next two days, two Gladiators were lost to Italian fighters as was another on the 23rd.

The remaining Greek Gladiators made their next, and final claims on 2 April when two Z. 1007 bombers were claimed. The 21 Mira was at Paramythia when the German assault came and it soon fell back. On the 15th Kellas' aircraft was hit by a Bf 109 and he crash landed his burning aircraft. The surviving Greek fighters, including about eight

Below: The double barred cross identifies Gladiator G-705 as one of those exported to Lithuania in the late 1930's. Below right: Norwegian Army Air Service Gladiator No 421 taxis out at Tyrifjord during the invasion of 9 April 1940. It later went through the ice and was lost.

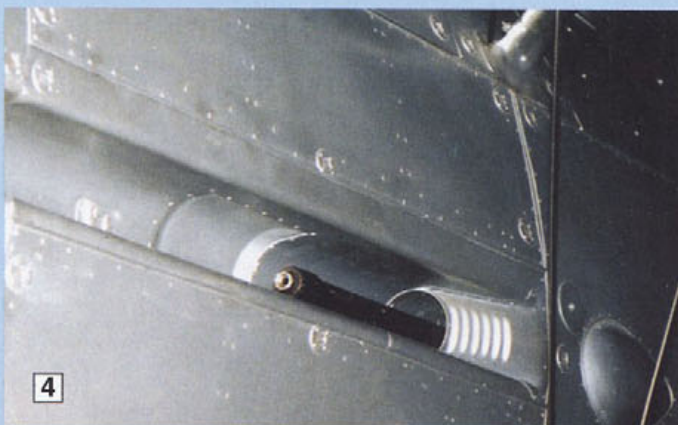
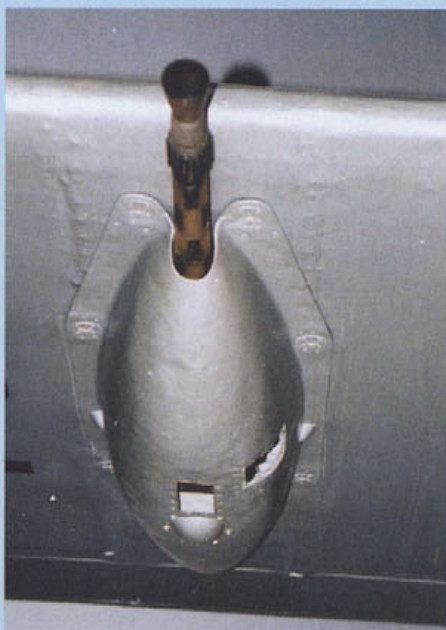




1. General arrangement view of the RAF Museum's Gladiator K8042. 2. Starboard wing .303 machine gun and housing. 3. View of the tail unit, bracing and control wires. 4. Port fuselage .303 machine gun housing and blast shield. 5. The interplane struts, bracing wires and the cockpit windscreen. The front part of the fuselage is all metal, painted Aluminium.

Gloster Gladiator in Detail

Pictures by Adrian Balch of the RAF Museum's Gladiator Mk.II K8042



Gloster Gladiator specifications

GLADIATOR Mk.I

Power Plant: One Bristol Mercury IX nine cylinder, single row air cooled radial rated at 830 hp at 2,750 rpm at 14,500 feet.

Airscrew: Watts wooden two-blade airscrew of 10 ft 9 in diameter

Dimensions: Wing Span: 32 ft 3 in
Chord: 5 ft 9 in
Gap: 5 ft 3 in
Length: 27 ft 5 in
Height: 11 ft 9 in
Wing area: 323 sq ft

Armament: Four fixed 0.303 in Browning machine guns, two fuselage mounted for synchronised firing through the airscrew with 600 rounds per gun. One blister mounted beneath each lower wing with 400 rpg. However, the first 60 aircraft (K6129-K6951 and K7892-K7928) were fitted with drum fed underwing Lewis guns, each fitted with one 97 round magazine. The next ten aircraft (K7929-K7938) were fitted with underwing Vickers 'K' guns, each fitted with one 100 round magazine.

Weights: Empty: 3217 lb
Loaded: 4592 lb

Performance: Maximum speed: 210 mph at sea level; 226 mph at 5000 ft; 253 mph @ 14,500 ft
Stalling speed: 53 mph (flaps down)
Service Ceiling: 32,800 ft
Climb: 4 min 40 sec to 10,000 ft; 9 min 3 sec to 20,000 ft

Range: 428 miles

Endurance: 1 hr 54 min

GLADIATOR Mk.II

Power Plant: One Bristol Mercury VIIIA or VIIIAS supercharged nine cylinder, single row air cooled radial rated at 830 hp at 2750 rpm at 14,600 feet and 840 hp with manual boost override.

Airscrew: Fairey metal three-blade airscrew of 10 ft 6 in diameter

Dimensions: Wing Span: 32 ft 3 in
Chord: 5 ft 9 in
Gap: 5 ft 3 in
Length: 27 ft 5 in
Height: 11 ft 9 in
Wing area: 323 sq ft

Armament: Four fixed 0.303 in Browning machine guns, two fuselage mounted for synchronised firing through the airscrew with 600 rounds per gun. One blister mounted beneath each lower wing with 400 rpg.

Weights: Empty: 3444 lb
Loaded: 4864 lb

Performance: Maximum speed: 215 mph at sea level; 224 mph at 5000 ft; 257 mph at 14,500 ft
Stalling speed: 54 mph (flaps down)
Service Ceiling: 33,500 ft
Climb: 4 min 30 sec to 10,000 ft; 8 min 45 sec to 20,000 ft

Range: 444 miles

Endurance: 2 hr 6 min

SEA GLADIATOR

Power Plant: One Bristol Mercury VIIIA or VIIIAS supercharged nine cylinder, single row air cooled radial rated at 830 hp at 2,750 rpm at 14,600 feet and 840 hp with manual boost override.

Airscrew: Fairey metal three-blade airscrew of 10 ft 6 in diameter

Dimensions: Wing Span: 32 ft 3 in
Chord: 5 ft 9 in
Gap: 5 ft 3 in
Length: 27 ft 5 in
Height: 11 ft 9 in
Wing area: 323 sq ft

Armament: Four fixed 0.303 in Browning machine guns, two fuselage mounted for synchronised firing through the airscrew with 600 rounds per gun. One blister mounted beneath each lower wing with 400 rpg.

Weights: Empty: 3553 lb
Loaded: 5019 lb

Performance: Maximum speed: 210 mph at sea level; 220 mph at 5000 ft; 253 mph at 14,500 ft
Stalling speed: 55 mph (flaps down)
Service Ceiling: 33,500 ft
Climb: 4 min 42 sec to 10,000 ft; 9 min 8 sec to 20,000 ft

Range: 415 miles

Endurance: 1 hr 58 min

Gladiators moved to Amphiklia the next day where they were caught on the ground on the 19th by strafing Bf 109s and most destroyed. The three survivors moved to Eleusis where they met their end in an attack by Bf 109s of I/JG 27 the following day.

Iraq

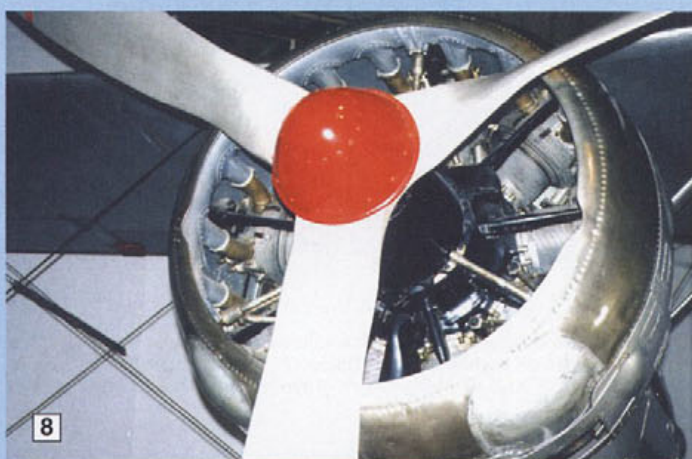
During the mid-1930's the Royal Iraqi Air Force underwent a significant expansion and amongst the aircraft acquired were 15 Gladiators ordered from Glosters. The first six arrived in Iraq in early December 1937 and were erected and tested by British personnel before handing over to No. 4 Squadron on the 13th. The remainder were shipped in early 1938, the final one being delivered on 30 March. The Gladiator was the best fighter in the RIAF and to bring No. 4 Squadron up to strength pilots and ground staff were withdrawn from other units. No. 4's aircraft suffered a number of losses, the first being No. 85 which crashed on 27 January 1940 killing the pilot, Flt Lt Ibn Haj Rizougi. Another four were lost during the year. In early 1941 No. 4 Squadron had seven on strength though others were in repair, or grounded due to a lack of spares.

No. 4 Squadron went into action against its erstwhile mentors in May 1941 during the Habbaniya affair. As recounted earlier, the Iraqi Gladiators saw considerable action, destroying two Audax and an Oxford on the airfield during strafing attacks on the 2nd and sharing the destruction of a Wellington of No. 70 Squadron with anti-aircraft fire on the 4th. One of No. 4's aircraft was also claimed destroyed by...an RAF Gladiator!

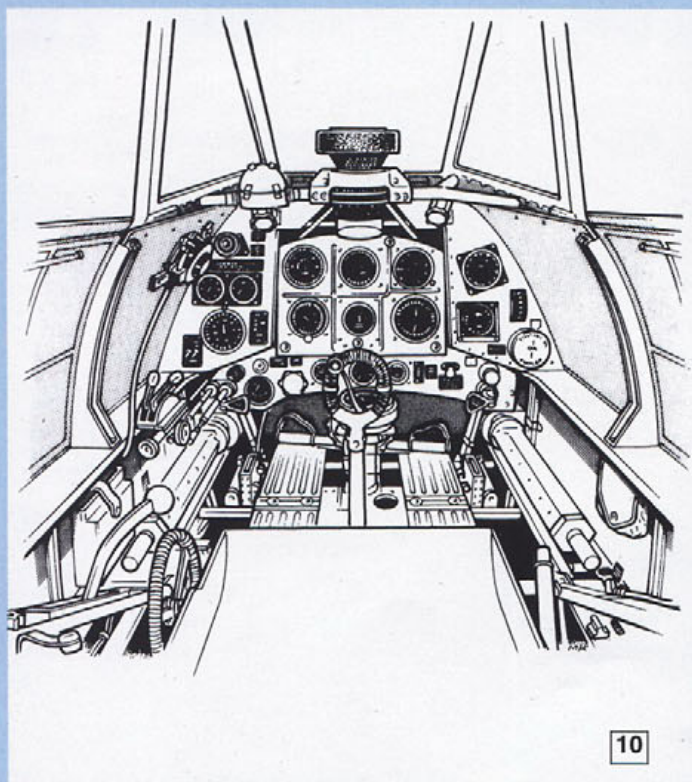
After the end of the brief campaign the Iraqis are thought to have had just five Gladiators left. However, in September 1942 five more were transferred to the RIAF from No. 134 MU with another five being delivered in July 1943 and five more two months later. At the end of the year a number of grounded examples arrived as a spares source with eight more flyable examples, albeit in a poor state being delivered from

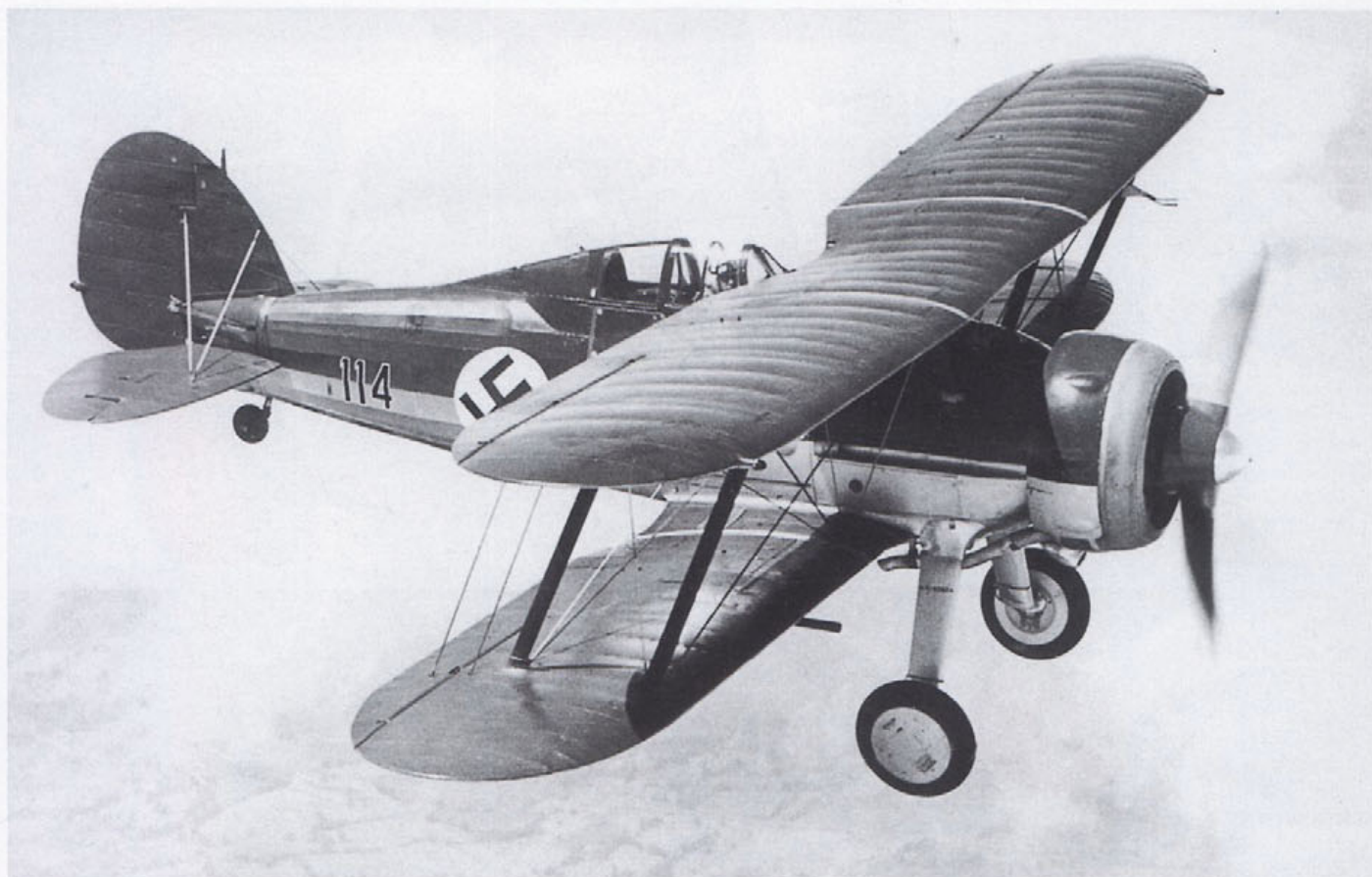
The Winter War over, the Swedish Gladiators of F19 were decorated in various markings and had their Finnish roundels overpainted when seen at Kauhava on 30 March 1940. The nearest aircraft is 285:C





6. Detail of port wing, struts, bracing wires and the position of the pitot tube. 7. The Gladiator's undercarriage legs. Note that the exhaust pipe was missing when the pictures were taken. 8. The engine detail and the metal three-bladed fixed pitch propeller used on the Gladiator Mk.II. 9. Looking down on the cockpit and wings from above. Hand holds are placed in the centre of the upper wing for easy cockpit access. 10. The cockpit interior. Conventional blind flying panel and engine instruments with the throttle on the left hand side. 11. Port fuselage side showing the markings, squadron leader's insignia and emergency first aid panel.





RAF stocks in May 1944. By this time No. 5 Squadron also had some Gladiators on strength, though No. 4 remained the major user.

These biplanes remained in use after the end of World War 2 based at Rashid and Kirkuk, though several were lost in flooding in March 1946. No. 4 still had the remaining Gladiators on strength when the RIAF went onto a war footing in concert with other Arab nations at the time of the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. On 12 May at least two Gladiators accompanied the Anson 'bombers' of Nos. 1 and 7 Squadrons to Mafraq in Jordan for operations against the fledgling state.

Although unconfirmed, the Gladiators may have flown some escort missions which if accurate give them the distinction of being the final war sorties of the old biplane. After this the six surviving aircraft remained in

Awaiting delivery to the Portuguese Air Arm at Hucclecote in 1938, these Gladiators served well into the 1950's - the last in use anywhere.

Above: The first export customer for the Gladiator was Latvia which bought 26, the first of which is seen on a test flight. The swastika was red on a white ground. Below: The Swedish Air Force Museum has preserved J-8A Gladiator No 278 as 'F' of F 19 which fought in Finland in 1940.



use for training at Rashid with the Training Squadron and with No. 4 Squadron until being finally withdrawn in 1951.

Eire

As a result of a 1936 treaty, Eire could only acquire military aircraft from Great Britain. Thus the following year when the Irish Army Air Corps began looking for a fighter, its scope was somewhat limited. An initial order was placed with Glosters for four Gladiator Is which were delivered via Liverpool Airport to Baldonnel on 9 March 1938.

They were issued to 'B' Flight of the First Army Co-operation Squadron but their numbers were soon drastically reduced. On 2 June one of them suffered a serious landing accident necessitating a lengthy repair, whilst on 23 October aircraft No. 23 crashed on landing near Baldonnel and was written off. Further efforts to order another four Gladiators were frustrated, initially by the British requirement for the type, and later by an arms embargo.

Thus the two available aircraft continued on training exercises with the Irish Army through 1939. Later that year the squadron was renamed as No. 1 Fighter Squadron which following the outbreak of war, instituted border patrols and held aircraft on readiness to intercept any aircraft that entered Irish air space.

The Gladiator was the fastest aircraft available to the Air Corps but many pilots watched in helpless frustration as an intruding aircraft powered away from the biplanes. However, the Irish Gladiators did occasionally fire their guns operationally when they were called upon to shoot down stray barrage balloons that had drifted across the Irish Sea. They also flew operationally in mid-1941 when they were moved to Ballinteer to monitor the border with Northern Ireland.

One of the best examples preserved is N5641, an original No. 263 Squadron aircraft raised from Lake Lesjakog and restored.

Eventually, in early 1943 the Air Corps received some Hurricanes from Britain that initially supplemented the Gladiators with No. 1 Squadron. The biplanes were, by now in a poor state and the first was withdrawn in August 1943 and a second by the end of the year. The surviving aircraft, No. 24, ended the type's service with the IAAC when it was destroyed in a crash in January 1944.

Latvia

During the spring of 1937 a purchasing delegation from the small Baltic republic of Latvia arrived in Britain to evaluate new equipment for the country's Aviation Regiment (Armijas Aviacija). To raise money for the new aircraft, the Latvian Aviation Regiment had the previous year sold its 11 surviving Bulldogs via a Czech agent to the Spanish Nationalists whilst capital was also raised in Latvia by a public lottery!

Eventually in May the purchasing delegation placed an order with Glosters for 26 Gladiator Mk Is and 17 spare Mercury engines. This was the first export order for the new fighter which was specified to be armed with four 7.7 mm Vickers Mk V machine guns. The aircraft were delivered by sea to Riga between August and November where they were assembled and tested.

With training completed the first batch of Gladiators, Nos. 114 to 126, were issued to the 123rd Eskadrille at Splive airfield near Riga. A second unit, the 124th Eskadrille, was also formed at Riga and received its first six Gladiators, 163 to 168, in April 1938. The remaining seven, 169 to 175, were received the following October.

The state of the Latvian airfields was poor and led to several accidents. For example 171 crashed near Blidene on 19 July 1938 whilst 167 was badly damaged in a landing accident on 21 January 1939. A further two aircraft, 121 and 175 are also known to have been written off whilst another suffered an

engine failure during a routine flight and was forced to land in Soviet territory where the pilot was interned for a time. He was later released, but the aircraft was kept by the Soviets thus giving them their first Gladiator.

The Soviet Union had for some time been making aggressive noises toward the small Baltic republics and in June 1940 there were several incidents on the Latvian border.

It is thought that 22 Gladiators remained in use with the Armijas Aviacija, though five were undergoing repair. To pre-empt a Soviet move, the Latvians dispersed their available aircraft to a variety of airstrips, the Gladiators apparently going to Jumravmuiza and Koknese.

Following the invasion of Lithuania, Soviet forces entered Latvia on 17 June and annexed the tiny country and absorbing most of the aircraft of the Latvian Aviation Regiment into the inventory of the Red Air Force.

Lithuania

Soon after the Latvian order was placed with Glosters, the neighbouring republic of Lithuania also acquired the Gladiator, placing an order for 14 aircraft to serve with the Air Corps (Karo Aviacija). They were similarly armed with Vickers Mk V guns and were delivered by sea during October and November 1937, being assembled under the supervision of Gloster technicians at Kaunas.

Training began as soon as aircraft were available and the fighter quickly proved a popular mount. The Gladiators were flown by the 5th Eskadra of the II Fighter Group at Shiulia whose pilots wore white flying overalls leading to the squadron being nicknamed 'the White Eagles'. For winter operations they flew with a ski undercarriage.

In Lithuanian service the Gladiator appears to have suffered only one serious accident when the control cables of G-704 froze resulting in a crash landing. Like Latvia, the





Soon to take to the skies once more is the former FAA Museum Gladiator N5903 shown during its original restoration.

Soviet Union had cast its eyes on Lithuania and on 15 June 1940 Soviet forces invaded the country resulting in its annexation into the Soviet Union, absorbing most of the aircraft into the Red Air Force, including about a dozen Gladiators.

Norway

In June 1937 the Norwegian Government placed an order with Glosters for six Gladiators to serve with the Jagevingen (Fighter Wing) of the Haerens Flygevaapen (Army Air Service). These Mk Is, armed with Colt machine guns, were delivered to Kjeller by air via Holland, Germany and Denmark and arrived in mid-July. It was intended that another six should be delivered to the Mk II standard. But RAF orders took priority and the second batch was not delivered until 1939 when the last six Gladiators built, N5919-N5924, arrived from RAF contracts. These aircraft were fitted with the two bladed Watts propeller similar to the Mk I.

In December 1939 the Gladiator unit transferred to Fornebu airport outside Oslo from where training flights continued through the winter with the aircraft being fitted with ski undercarriages for winter operations. Two were to suffer accidents through the winter, No. 431 in 3 January 1940 and 417 on 15 March, this aircraft being destroyed. Thus when the German invasion of Scandinavia began on 9 April there were just seven Gladiators serviceable.

The German operation met its stiffest resistance at Oslo where Fornebu airport was a vital target in the plan.

The initial few Gladiator sorties had only brief contact with the waves of enemy aircraft but later another patrol took off and flew down Oslo Fjord where over Nesodden they found the leading wave of Ju 52s and dived to attack. Lt Tradin flying 429 hit the starboard wing and engine of one which rolled over and went down near Hovik. Another was attacked by Sgt Waaler which may also have crashed. Sgt Schye in 427 attacked a Bf 110 near Kolsås taking out both engines and forcing it down. He was then attacked himself and crash landed. An He 111 was shot down over Nesodden by Lt Krohn in 421 and a Bf 110 may have gone down to the same pilot. Meanwhile Fornebu was subjected to a heavy strafing attack that destroyed several Gladiators on the ground.

Warned of the attack Krohn and Lt Tradin then landed on a frozen lake but the latter's aircraft broke through the ice, so Krohn landed elsewhere. Another Gladiator attempted to land on a frozen lake and also went through the ice and was lost. Thus after this flourish the Jagevingen had been effectively destroyed. The surviving aircraft, No. 421, flew a number of further sorties until it was damaged on 21 April thus ending the Gladiator's service in Norwegian colours.

Portugal

In July 1938 a Portuguese purchasing commission visit England to acquire new aircraft for the Arma da Aeronautica Militar which resulted in a contract for 15 Gladiator IIs being placed with Glosters. A number of Portuguese pilots were trained in England before the aircraft were delivered to OGMA in Portugal for assembly in September. After testing the Gladiators were taken on strength of BA 2 at Ota.

With the Spanish Civil War raging, it was evident to the Portuguese that the Gladiator was already obsolescent but when efforts to obtain modern monoplane fighters were unsuccessful, further Gladiators were ordered. Fifteen ex-RAF Mk IIs were delivered during 1939 and formed a new Escadrihla de Caca at BA 3 Tancos. Like their sister unit at Ota, the new unit trained and maintained readiness against any intruders from the belligerent countries.

The Gladiators remained at Ota and Tancos

until to guard against a possible Allied occupation of the Azores, in June 1941, the Escadrihla de Caca Expeditionaria No. 1 dos Azores was formed for the defence of the islands. The Gladiators, left the mainland by sea, arriving in San Miguel on 8 June and the 15 aircraft moved to Rabo de Peixe. The remaining ten aircraft went to the island of Terceira where the Escadrihla de Caca Expeditionaria No. 2 dos Azores was formed at Achada and later Lajes. The Portuguese were tied by ancient treaty to Britain, and the main role of the fighters was to deter overflights by long range Luftwaffe Fw 200s. Although the Gladiators made a number of sightings their lack of speed prevented any interceptions being achieved.

Eventually, more modern equipment was forthcoming and at the end of 1943 the Gladiators were replaced in front line use by Mohawk IVs and were relegated to second line duties. This was, however, far from the end of the Gladiator's Portuguese service as the remaining aircraft remained in use and when EEC 2 returned to Ota in 1946 its surviving aircraft went with it. There they were used for a time before being passed to Escadrihla No. 2 at Tancos alongside its Hurricanes.

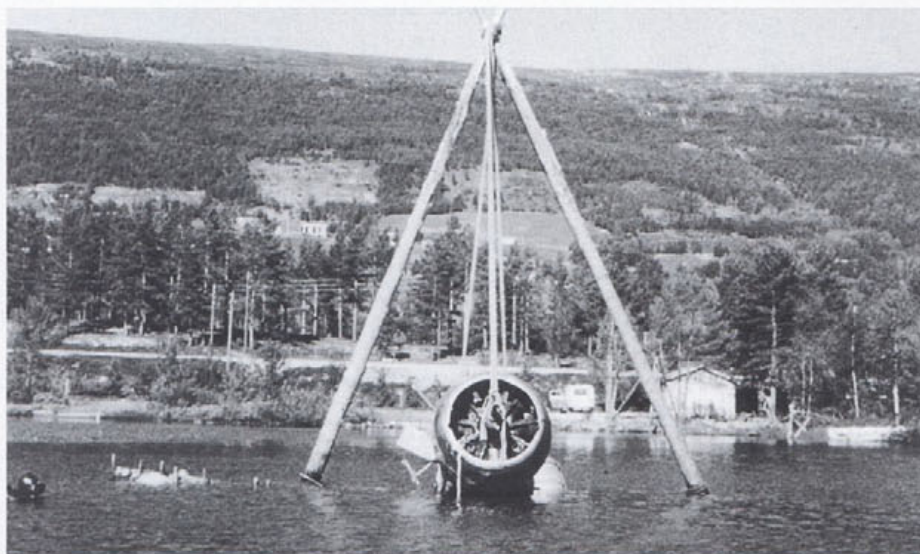
In 1948 the few remaining Gladiators returned to Lajes for service with Escadrihla No. 3 where they flew for the next couple of years. In early 1950 the seven survivors were shipped back to Tancos where the biplane's wonderful manoeuvrability was used for aerobatic training. They survived long enough to see the demise of the Aeronautica Militar and Aviao Naval which in July 1952 combined to form the Portuguese Air Force (Forca Aerea Portuguesa). The following year the last Gladiators in military service were withdrawn, the last vestiges of a long bygone age.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union became an unlikely and brief Gladiator user when following the annexation of Latvia and Lithuania the surviving aircraft were impressed into the Red Air Force. In Lithuania ten Gladiators were available whilst two were undergoing repair

Gloster Gladiator kits and accessories

Scale	Version	Manufacturer	Reference	Remarks
Kits				
1:72	Gladiator	Airfix	Discontinued	Also Heller
1:72	Gladiator Mk.I/II	Encore	EE1007	ex-Heller. Wheels/skis
1:72	Gladiator	Matchbox	PK008	
1:72	Gladiator Mk.I	Matchbox	PK062	Re-boxed new decals
1:48	Gladiator	Roden	ROD48008	To be released
1:48	Gladiator Mk.II	Lindberg	LI72561	
1:32	Gladiator	ID Models	ID3247	Vacuform kit
1:24	Gladiator	Contrail	CON204	Vacuform kit
Accessories				
1:72	Gladiator	Airwaves	AEC72109	Photo etched parts
1:72	Sea Gladiator	AVResin	AVRC031	Bulge, prop, spinner
1:48	Gladiator	Aeroclub	ABP419	Two-blade prop
1:48	Gladiator	Airwaves	AEC48087	Photo etched parts
Decals				
1:72	Gladiator	AML Decals	AML7201	
1:72	Gladiator	Blue Rider	BR400	Lithuanian AF
1:72	Gladiator	Superscale	SS72143	Three sets
1:72	Gladiator	Tally Ho	TH7024	April 1940
1:72	Gladiator	Aviation USK	USK7108	Finnish AF three sets
1:72	Sea Gladiator	Delta Aviation	DAPR7202	
1:48	Gladiator	Aeromaster	AMD48187	Decals
1:48	Gladiator	Tally Ho	TH4207	Finnish AF decals



when annexed. With their Lithuanian crosses replaced by red stars, late in 1940, some were issued to the Tautine Eskadra as the Air Corps had been retitled. Based at Skzoly the Eskadra supported the Red Army 29th Territorial Rifle Corps as the Lithuanian forces had been reconstituted.

It is thought that around 20 Latvian aircraft were also impressed, and at least five entered service with the Red Air Force, three being flown in a display over Riga and Spilve during August 1940. The Latvian forces became the Red Army's 24th Territorial Rifle Corps and were supported by the remnants of the Aviation Regiment most of whose former equipment was used by the Soviets for training.

The Tautine Eskadra is believed to have flown against the advancing German Army following the opening of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. However, most aircraft in Lithuania were soon destroyed on the ground by the Luftwaffe. Several Gladiators are known to have survived intact and been captured at Siauliai by the advancing Germans and were later used by the

Luftwaffe. Likewise, the Germans captured a number of ex-Latvian Gladiators that were also pressed into service by the Luftwaffe as previously described.

Sweden

In 1936 the Swedish Government instituted an expansion programme for the Royal Swedish Air Force (Flygvapnet). The Swedes had for some years obtained fighter aircraft from British manufacturers and it was to this source that they looked for a replacement for the Bristol Bulldogs then in service. A total of some 55 Gladiators were delivered to Sweden, the 37 Mk Is with 640 hp Mercury VIs being designated J-8 and the 18 840 hp Mercury VIII powered Mk IIs being designated as the J-8A. The first were delivered in the spring of 1937, but the next batch of five did not follow until October and these were used for testing and it was not until April 1938 that a steady stream of deliveries began.

The first Swedish Gladiator unit, Flygflottilj 8 (F.8) at Barkaby near Stockholm received its aircraft during 1938

One of No. 263's aircraft, N5628 emerges from the waters of Lake Lesjakog. It is now in the RAF Museum and is preserved 'as is'.

and the new fighter was soon established in service with the Wing. The large Swedish re-equipment programme was to ensure its neutrality could be stoutly defended should hostilities break out in Europe as seemed likely.

Soviet expansion in the Baltic region was of particular concern to the Swedes so when the Soviet Union invaded its Finnish neighbour on 30 November 1939 it decided to offer material support to the Finns. A Swedish volunteer unit, Flygflottilj 19 (F.19) was formed under command of Major Hugo Beckenhammer. F.19 (originally given the Finnish title of Lento R-5) comprised an Attack squadron of four B-4 Harts and a Fighter Squadron of 12 J-8A Gladiators. It was ordered to Kemi in northern Finland for the protection of Finnish Lapland. It arrived on 10 January 1940 and mounted its first mission on the 12th when four J-8As escorted four Harts to the Soviet base at Markajärvi where they carried out successful bombing and strafing attacks. On the return flight two of the Harts collided and a third was shot down by Soviet I-15 fighters. However, the balance was redressed somewhat when 2/Lt Jacobi in 284:F shot down one of the I-15s.

Patrols were mounted daily in spite of the severe winter weather and they next encountered the enemy on 17 January when a patrol over the Salle area met four I-15s. In a brief combat two were brought down. It was to be a week until the Gladiators next encountered Soviet aircraft but during a sweep the ubiquitous I-15s were met but in the fight 'B' (believed to be aircraft 281) was shot down and its pilot killed. The Soviets regularly conducted bombing raids on Finnish towns and were occasionally found by the Swedes.

The Shuttleworth Gladiator Mk.II L8032 was originally taken on by Glosters in 1948 as G-AMRK and is shown before being restored to military markings.





The Shuttleworth Collection Gladiator L8032 masquerading as 'K8032' resplendent in the colourful markings of No. 72 Squadron.

The first successful encounter was on 1 February when several formations of Tupolev SB-2 bombers attacked Rovaniemi. F.19s Gladiators caught them during the second raid and one was shot down. After that Soviet bombers were not seen in F.19's area, though the Swedes conducted regular patrols and mounted ground attacks against Soviet positions. On the 20th bombers were reported over Vaala and two Gladiators intercepted them, one enemy aircraft was brought down and two damaged. The following day four Gladiators fell on a formation of bombers bringing down another SB-2 and a DB-3.

The Swedes continued in action over Lapland, turning back a raid on 24 February by making dummy attacks as their guns had frozen! On 7 March, however, the guns were in perfect order when a formation of DB-3s attacked Vaala. Only one Gladiator was airborne but its pilot managed to shoot down two before the remainder of the much faster bombers escaped. Three days later, on 10 March, F.19's final combat gave them a significant victory. Six huge four-engined Tupolev TB-3 heavy bombers attacked the Rovaniemi area and were intercepted by Ens Karlsson who concentrated his fire on one, and used all his ammunition before having the satisfaction of seeing it crash into the snow behind Finnish lines near Lake Kemijarvi. This was also the final Gladiator kill of the 'Winter War' as a ceasefire became effective on 13 March and F.19 prepared to return to Sweden. The unit flew home at the end of the month, its Gladiators having flown 464 sorties and claimed 10 aircraft destroyed in combat for the loss of two.

The return of F.19, however, did not mean

an end to the Gladiator's operational use with the Swedes as F.8's aircraft still patrolled the skies against incursions into Swedish airspace. Throughout the war the Flygvapnet intercepted or forced down around 130 intruders, the Gladiators being involved in a proportion of these.

What is thought to have been the first came soon after F.19's return home when on 21 April a Luftwaffe He 111 entered Swedish airspace whilst conducting operations off Norway. It was fired on by a Swedish warship and by a J-8A forcing the bomber to force land. Another unidentified aircraft was shot down a month later and may possibly have been an RAF Hudson. Through 1940 the Gladiators were gradually passed on to F.9 at Farsand who retained them until 1941 when they were relegated to second line duties, initially with the Bulltofta based F.10. However, the following year its establishment of Gladiators was shared with the original Flyglottilj, F.8. Both these units continued to hold J-8s until 1945 when just 13 remained in service.

From 1944 the major user of the decreasing number of available aircraft was the Uppsala based F.16. The last Gladiator in service was withdrawn in 1946 and the sur-

vivors were struck off charge in February 1947, except for No. 278 that was preserved and still exists in the Air Force Museum, appropriately in the Winter War markings of F.19.

REQUIEM

Like all gallant old soldiers, the Gladiator did not die, it merely faded away yet the aircraft unlike many of its contemporaries is well preserved for posterity and future generations with a number of pristine examples being preserved, notably in the RAF Museum, the Swedish Air Force Museum, The Royal Norwegian Air Force Museum and the National War Museum, Malta.

Luckily, the type may also be seen in the air. For many years the Shuttleworth Trust at Old Warden has maintained the only airworthy example which will in the future be joined by a second. This one will be operated from Duxford by the Fighter Collection, but each will present to modern audiences an echo of a distinguished and heroic past.

Very rare view of a Latvian Gladiator on patrol near Riga in 1939. Some of these aircraft later served with the Luftwaffe

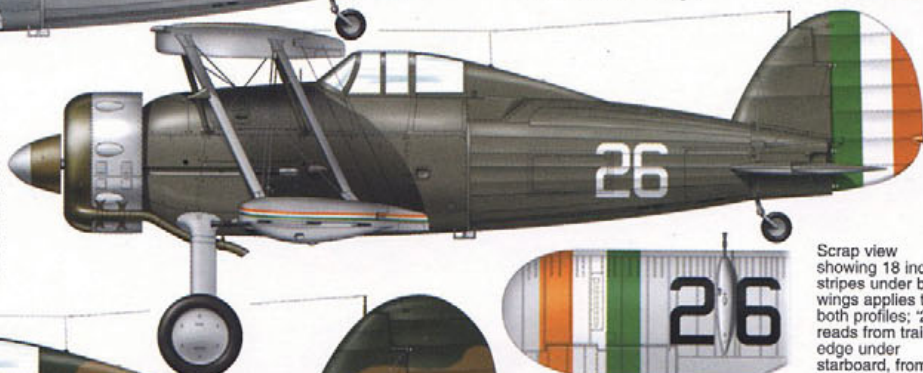




Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, G-704, Lithuanian Air Force, 1939. 'Silver' scheme; Dark Green top surfaces of wings and elevator. National marking over a Dark Green base on rudder and below wings; normal above wings



Right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk. I, '26'**, in delivery scheme to Irish Air Corps, 1938. Light Green overall with natural metal cowlings



Scrap view showing 18 inch stripes under both wings applies to both profiles; '26' reads from trailing edge under starboard, from leading edge under port



Left: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, 26**, of N° 1 Fighter Squadron, Irish Air Corps, 1940. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces; Aluminium undersides.



Left: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, N5852**, N° 1 Squadron, South African Air Force, East Africa, 1940. Dark Earth and Dark Green upper surfaces; Sky undersides. Roundels in standard RAF style, but with central orange circle. Black spinner

Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, 459, Esquadilha de Caça Expedicionaria (Expeditionary Fighter Squadron) Nr. 2, Achada, August 1941. Dark Green and Light Blue scheme; see scrap view (bottom) for wing markings (roundel above top wing similar)



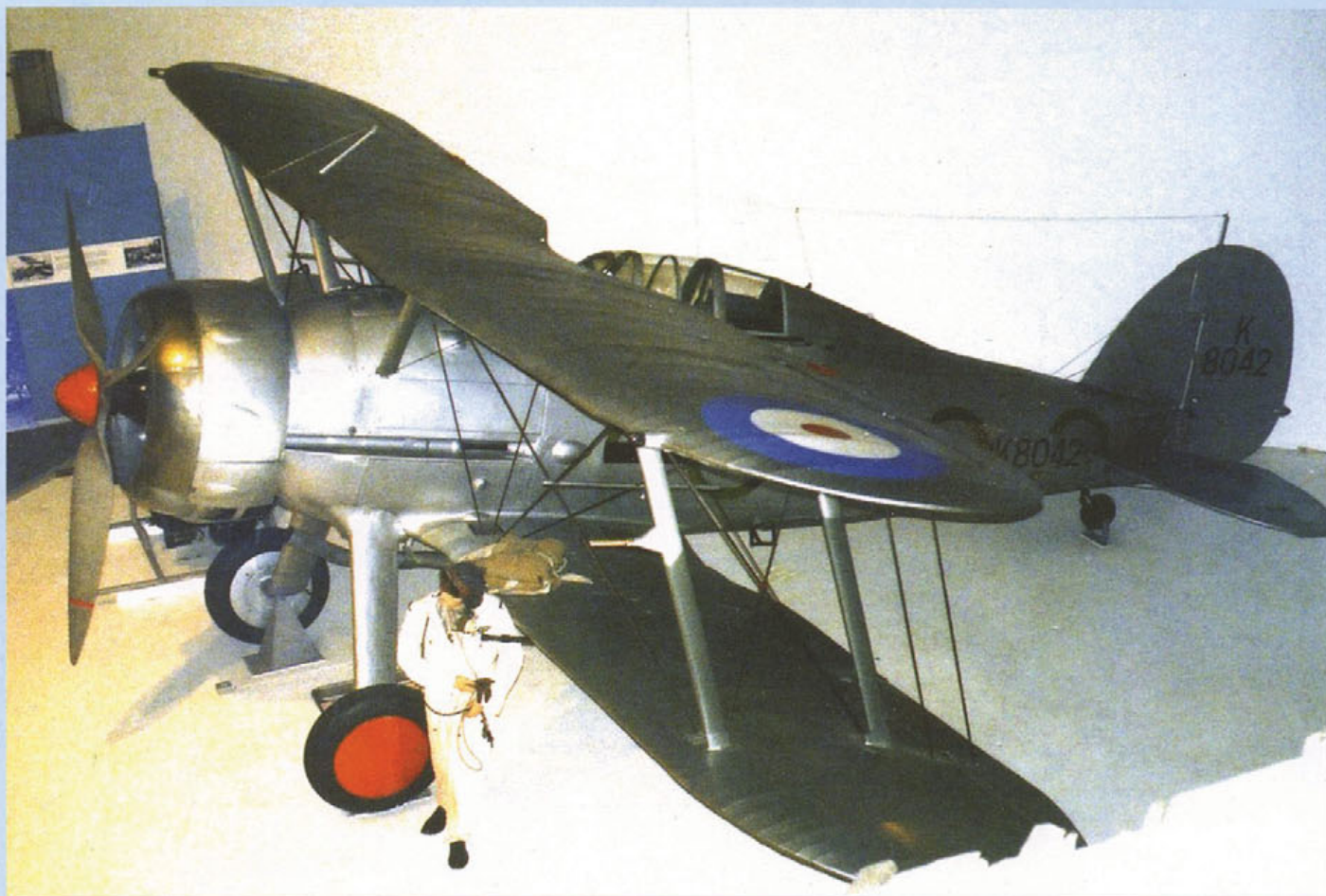
Above: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, 423**, Royal Norwegian Air Force, 9 April 1940. Standard 'silver' scheme. Bands in the same colours as rudder are repeated above top wings and below bottom wings; codes in black



Above, right: **Gloster Gladiator Mk.II, L8025**, Egyptian Air Force. Ex-RAF scheme of Dark and Light Earth; originally Black and White undersides, though the black has been eliminated by repainting in white. Roundels on fuselage and above wings only



Gloster Gladiator Mk.I, NJ+BO, ErgGr (s) 1, Luftwaffe, 1943. RLM 02 overall except for engine cowlings which is probably a replacement still painted in Dark Green. Standard Luftwaffe markings, with Werke number 45829 in White just above the fin Swastika



Above: Gloster Gladiator Mk.II K8042 in the markings of the squadron leader's aircraft, No. 87(F) Squadron, when based at RAF Debden before the war. The aircraft is now preserved with its own special display in the RAF Museum Hendon. (Adrian Balch). Below: The Shuttleworth Collection's Gloster Gladiator Mk. I seen in 1974 when it had an all-silver colour scheme and the markings of No.72 Squadron, and serialised L8032. Later it was camouflaged as shown on the front cover and given the codes of No. 247 Squadron. (Richard Caruana)



Warpaint titles

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