

THE HAWKER SEA FURY: DETAILS, COLOR PROFILES AND BACKGROUND

By Robert Trimble

Any number of very attractive finishing schemes
await the builder of the Sea Fury.



A Royal Navy Sea Fury about to touch down on a carrier deck during Korean War operation. This fellow is hot and is going to run into some trouble seeing as though his tail hook has missed the cables.

A flight of four Canadian Navy Sea Furies is seen here in the typical early Royal Navy colors of Dark Sea Gray upper surfaces and Duck Egg Green lower surfaces. The Canadians later went to their own distinctive two-tone gray paint scheme and a somewhat modified roundel with a larger oak leaf. These particular aircraft are F.B. 11 types as photographed during March 1950.

Two Royal Canadian Navy F.B. 11 Sea Furies prepare to launch from the carrier HMCS MAGNIFICENT during Oct. 1953.

With its hump-backed Hurricane firmly entrenched, the trouble-plagued but lethal Typhoon entering squadron service, and the prototype Tempest beginning its flight test program, Hawker Aircraft turned its collective mind to designing a new fighter, based on the Tempest but weighing considerably less than that machine.

Original thinking revolved around eliminating the Tempest's wide center-section stub, mating the outer panels along the fuselage centerline, but the paper airplane was brought into line with Air Ministry requirements and offered as the Tempest Light Fighter (Centaurus). Company proposals were in turn legitimized when the Ministry turned around and issued a new Specification based on Hawker's figures,

giving them all the encouragement needed to press on with their preliminary work on the airplane.

Sydney Camm, responsible for the Hurricane and its offspring, responded to yet another government-issued set of requirements for a naval fighter with the counter-suggestion that, by re-engineing the paper Tempest with an uprated Centaurus radial, it would prove suitable for use by the Royal Navy as well as the RAF. Accordingly, while the parent company continued with the land-based version, Boulton-Paul was handed the job of navalization. By December 1943 an order for six real airplanes had been placed, four being designated as engine test-beds to investigate the suitability of alternate powerplants. A fifth was to



be used for static tests, and only one of the lot was fitted with the Centaurus XII which it had been designed around in the first place.

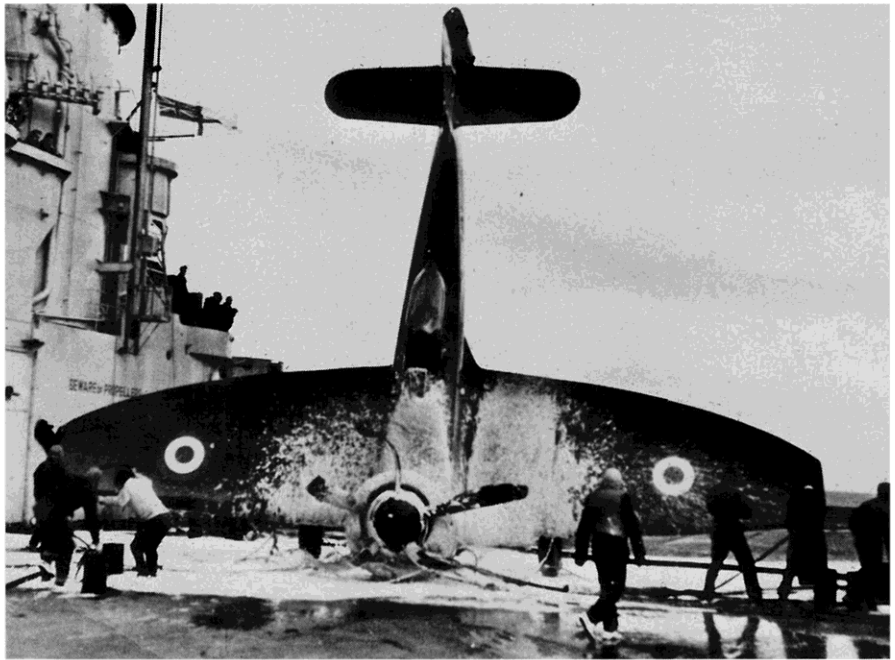
Assigned the serial NX798 this machine was the first to fly, company test pilot P. G. Lucas taking it up on 1 September 1944. So far the plane had been identified officially as the F.2/43 or F.22/43, for RAF and RN variants respectively, but later that year the RAF fighter became the Fury I while the RN's version was the Sea Fury X.

With the end of the war in Europe becoming plainly (or painfully, depending upon one's nationality) apparent, cutbacks were made in orders for the Furies, Boulton-Paul being dropped entirely before it could complete even the prototype Sea Fury, VB857. Hawker's own Sea Fury, SR661, made its first flight on 21 February 1945, powered by a Centaurus XII swinging a four-bladed Rotol propeller like the Fury, but with the appearance of the second machine, SR666, a five-bladed unit was substituted.

Peace saw the RAF's Furies canceled outright, emphasis being switched to the Navy's fighter, the first 50 being completed during 1946. A number of these used four-bladed props, but the five-blade Rotol became standard soon after production began. Carrier trials were carried out aboard HMS *Victorious*, problems with the arrestor hook holding up full qualification until the Spring of 1947 when, following a modification program, the planes were cleared for squadron use.

Despite the troubles which cropped up during shipboard operations, armament tests had been conducted simultaneously using Hawker's SR666 and a production Sea Fury X, various combinations of rockets, smoke markers, auxiliary fuel tanks, and napalm fire bombs being loaded. Combined with a lengthened and strengthened hook and provisions for RATO solid-fuel rockets, the ground-attack modifications resulted in the appearance of a new variant, the Sea Fury F.B. 11, which would replace the Mark Xs within a year of the day fighters' entering Fleet service. Although only 615 F.B.11s were built at Hawker's Kingston-on-Thames plant over a seven-year period, they formed the Fleet Air Arm's main carrier-based fighter force until replaced in 1953 by Hawker Sea Hawks.

Despite their small numbers, the Sea Furies gave a good account of themselves when, following the North Korean invasion of the Republic of Korea on 25 June 1950, HMS *Theseus* joined U.S. Seventh Fleet units in attacks against Communist ground



Hardly a fitting end of a Royal Navy Sea Fury which nosed over during carrier operation. However, this photo does serve to show an interesting top view of an airplane that is painted in typical late RCAF colors. The under surfaces and the sides of the fuselage are painted in the light Duck Egg Green but because all we see are the Dark Sea Gray upper surfaces, the airplane takes on an entirely different look.



You've got to construct a scale prop and spinner for static judging, so here they are.

This head-on view of a surplus civilian Sea Fury stripped down to bare metal provides the modeler with details of the leading edge air intakes.



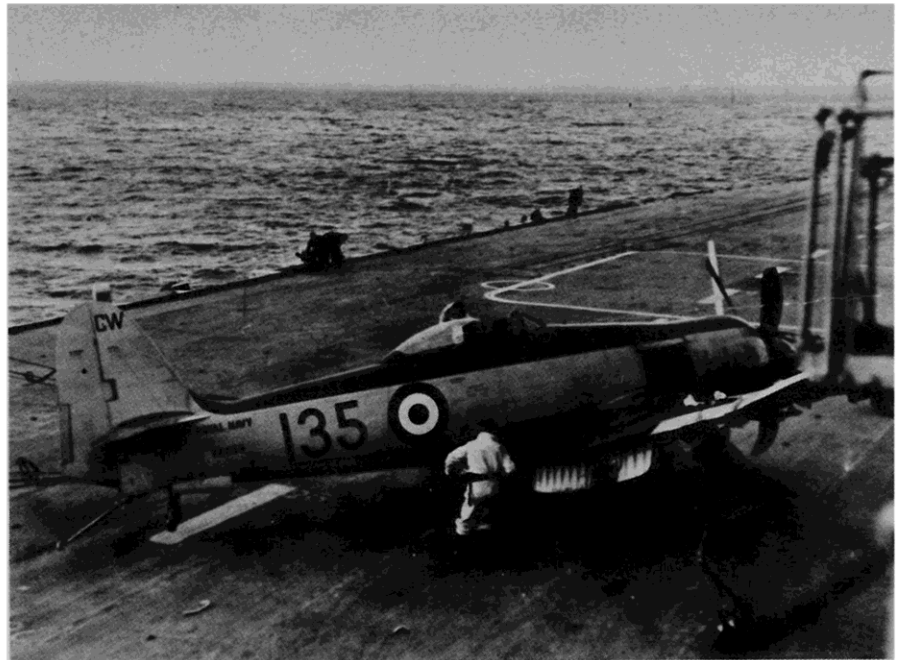
forces, fighters from its No. 807 Squadron launching their first strikes on 7 December. HMS *Ocean* and *Glory*, as well as HMAS *Sydney*, also were sent to Korea, the Australians having received enough ex-Royal Navy aircraft during 1949 and '50 to form their own squadrons. Tangling with MiG 15s, a number of Sea Furies were lost, but the North Koreans did not escape unscathed, No. 802 Squadron's Lt. P. Carmichael scoring the first of several kills racked up by the prop-driven fighters.

Export sales saw Sea Furies scattered across the Middle and Far East, while in Europe proper the airplane went into license production in the Netherlands, following orders for 22 Mark 50s built by Hawker. Iraqi interest in the Fury had resulted in the appearance of a two-seat trainer, adopted by the Royal Navy before any examples reached their originally-intended destination, an order for a mixed lot of 30 aircraft—divided between fighters and fighter-bombers—being placed in December 1946, but not delivered until 1948. It was not until a year later that two trainers arrived, which must have caused some consternation since *four* had been expected. The first (VX818) was snaffled by the Royal Navy, who wound up buying an additional 60 T.Mk.20s on the strength of its test results, while a second headed for Pakistan.

The Pakistanis became Hawker's best overseas customers, eventually buying four more two-seaters and 93 Sea Furies. Others went to Egypt, a dozen being sold there; Burma bought a total of 21 reconditioned airplanes; and 17 were sold to Batista's government in Cuba, although these remained in their crates until after the crook was booted out by Fidel Castro and his happy crew.

Although the Sea Fury's military career was over by the early 1960s, its useful life was not. Ten T.20s were bought by a civilian firm in West Germany, the *Deutsche Luftfahrt Beratungsdienst*, in 1959 for use as target tugs operating under contract with the Federal German *Luftwaffe* with at least one single seater joining the group. The bloody red paint schemes were particularly colorful. These aircraft have now been sold to various enthusiasts in England and America for restoration and preservation.

Although not particularly significant, the most colorful role the Sea Fury has filled is that of a racer. A number of examples have been purchased by Americans and compete in the Unlimited Class at Reno's annual National Air Races as well as at the Mojave air races.



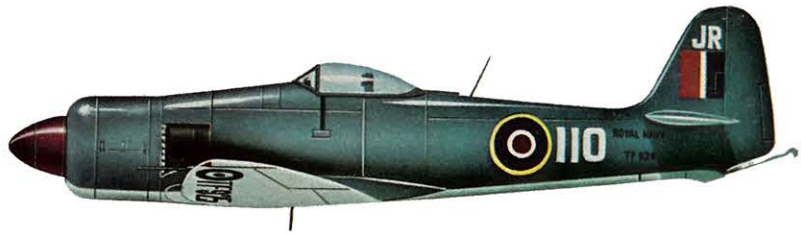
Aircraft #135 missed the arrestor cables and ended up in the net with a failure of the left main landing gear.



A detail view of the right main landing gear on a Sea Fury. Gear had to be beefy to handle such a heavy airplane during carrier operations.

A

A Sea Fury X of No. 805 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, as seen during 1948. Note that the Dark Sea Gray covers the top and sides of the fuselage while only the under surfaces are painted in Duck Egg Green.



A

B

Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm changed their paint schemes somewhat by simply extending the Duck Egg Green up and around the sides of the fuselage and the vertical fin. Only the upper part of the fuselage and the tops of the flying surfaces remained Dark Sea Gray.



B

C

This Sea Fury, finished in the Canadian Navy's distinctive two-tone gray paint scheme, is an F.B. 11 (Fighter/Bomber). The Canadians took delivery of their Sea Furies during the late 1940s.



C

D

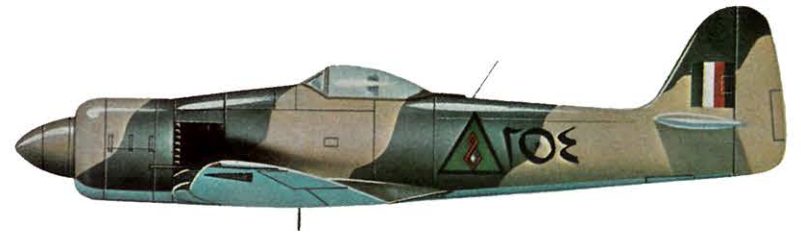
The Australian Navy purchased Sea Furies from Britain and at first operated them in the typical later Royal Navy paint scheme as shown in profile B. In the early 'fifties, however, the RAN adopted its own distinctive paint scheme of overall semi-gloss dark blue along with its own distinctive modification to the roundel.



D

E

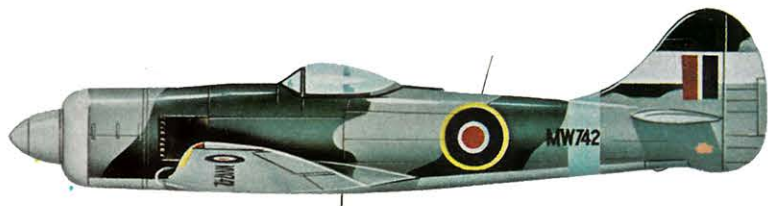
"Baghdad" Fury of the Iraqi Air Force circa 1948. A total of 62 variously modified Sea Furies were delivered to Iraq over several years, their major differences from Commonwealth airplanes being that they were non-navalized which meant the elimination of such outwardly apparent characteristics as folding wings and the tail hook.



E

F

Surprise! This is NOT a Sea Fury, but rather the airplane from which the idea for the Sea Fury sprang. This is a Hawker Tempest Mk.II of the RAF. Some 452 of these aircraft began entering service with the Royal Air Force just as WWII was drawing to a close. The type continued to serve on until the 1950s, one squadron operating against the terrorists in Malaya during 1949. Finished in the late war paint scheme of dark green and gray, modelers should note that there would be two primary modifications to their fiberglass fuselage to make an accurate Tempest Mk.II. Note that the hump in front of the cockpit is not so pronounced and that the rudder has a distinctively different shape.



F

