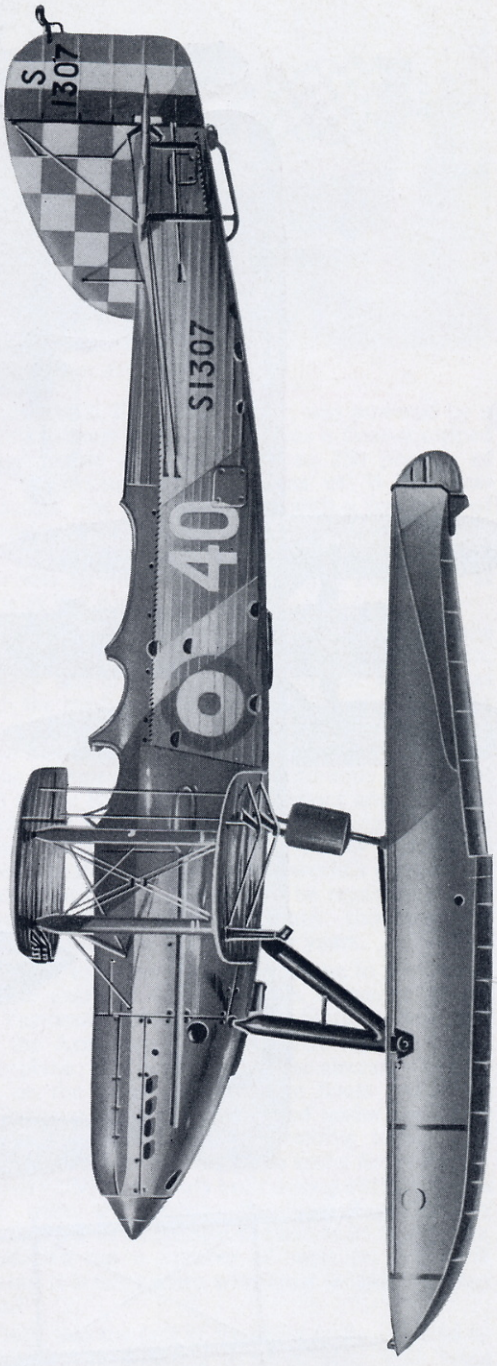
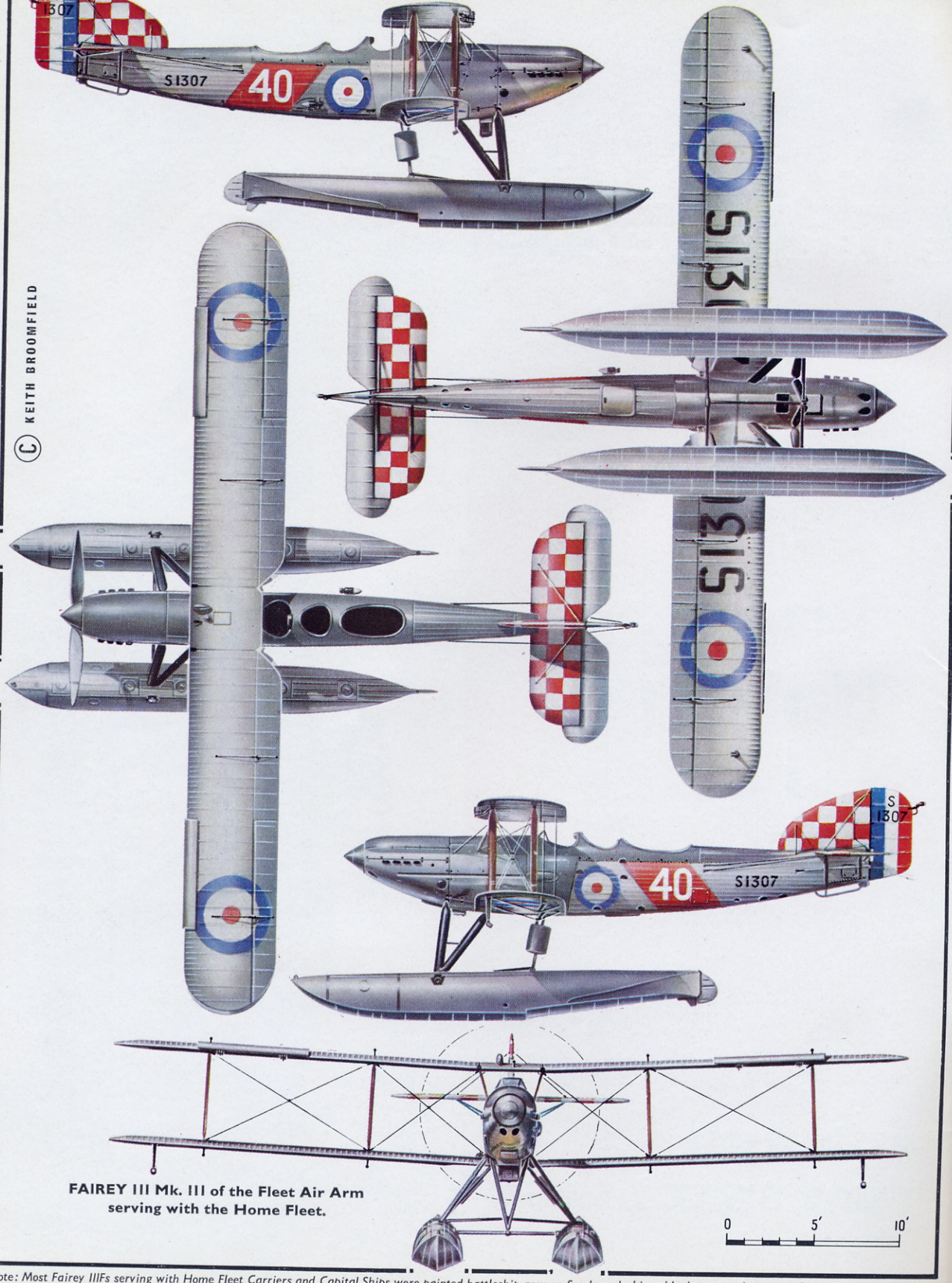
PROFILE
PUBLICATIONS

The Fairey IIIF



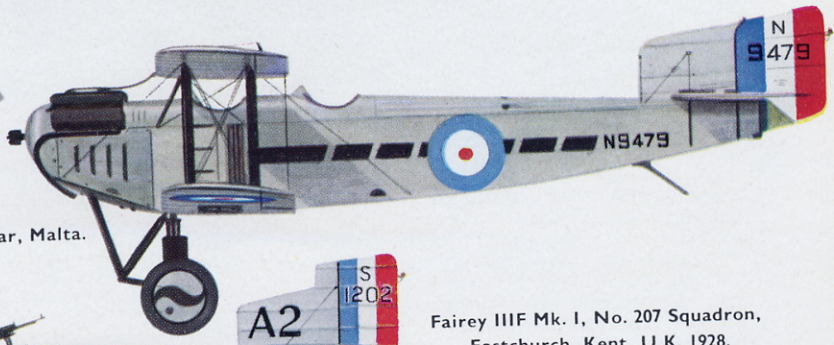
NUMBER 44
TWO SHILLINGS



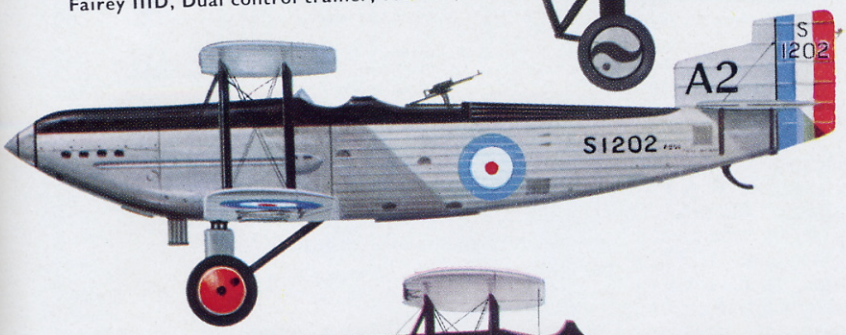
FAIREY III Mk. III of the Fleet Air Arm serving with the Home Fleet.

Note: Most Fairey IIIFs serving with Home Fleet Carriers and Capital Ships were painted battleship grey on fuselage decking: black was used on aircraft serving in other theatres.

Fairey IIID, Royal Netherlands Naval Air Service.

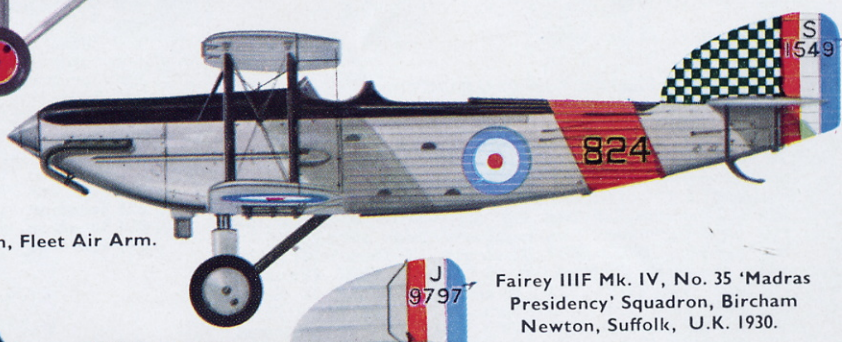


Fairey IIID, Dual control trainer, Hal Far, Malta.



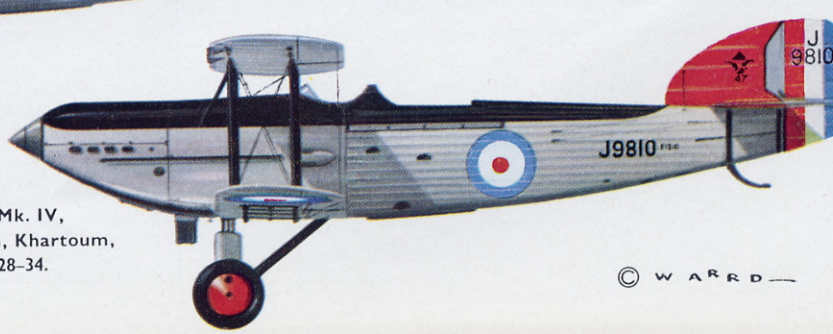
Fairey IIIF Mk. I, No. 207 Squadron, Eastchurch, Kent, U.K. 1928.

Fairey IIIF Mk. III, Fleet Air Arm, Unit unknown.



Fairey IIIF Mk. III, No. 824 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm.

Fairey IIIF Mk. IV, No. 35 'Madras Presidency' Squadron, Bircham Newton, Suffolk, U.K. 1930.



Fairey IIIF Mk. IV, No. 47 Squadron, Khartoum, Sudan, 1928–34.

The Fairey IIIF

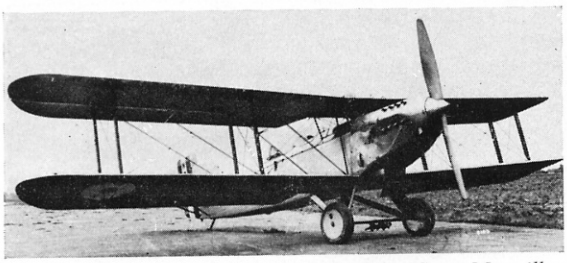
by Francis K. Mason

Fairey IIIF, Mk. III, of No. 824 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm.

"Och, but yon box o' bolts ha' gone fair since Kaiser Wullie's War" . . . immortal words attributed to an exasperated N.C.O. charged with the maintenance of a decrepit two-bay biplane struggling over the English countryside with an anti-aircraft target fluttering some 400 yards astern . . . in 1941.

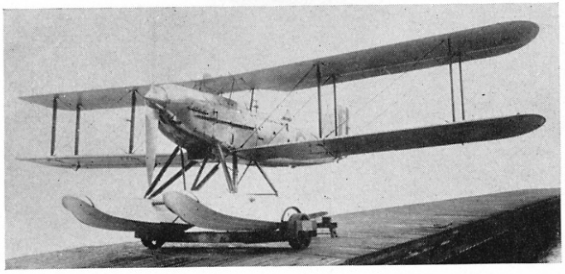
The aircraft, *K1726*, was one of three Fairey IIIF Mk. IVBs still on Air Ministry Charge with No. 2 A.A.C.U. in February 1941, sole flying remnants of a basic design that had commenced way back, indeed, before the end of the Kaiser's War.

Developed as a landplane from the Fairey N.20 twin-float seaplane, the Fairey IIIA of 1917 was a two-bay equal-span biplane of wooden construction intended for fleet reconnaissance duties, operating from carrier decks. Fifty (*N2850–2899*) were built but few were delivered to the Home Fleet before the Armistice, and the type was withdrawn in 1919.



The first prototype IIIF, N198, *as flown by Capt. Macmillan. Note the old horn-type arrester gear on the wheel axle.*
(Photo: Ministry of Defence)

The first prototype at Hamble equipped with twin-float gear, and first flown with such on 20th April 1926.
(Photo: Capt. N. Macmillan)



The Fairey IIIB, like its precursor, was powered by a 260-h.p. Sunbeam Maori II but was a float-equipped bomber capable of carrying up to 250 pounds of bombs. Resorting to conventions of W.W.I seaplane design, the IIIB was fitted with a top wing of considerably greater span than that of the lower. Thirty (*N2230–N2259*) were ordered and a small number was serving at Eastchurch and Felixstowe at the time of the Armistice.

Although built in far smaller numbers than the more famous Short floatplanes of the W.W.I era, the Fairey seaplanes were very popular and it was through the medium of the Fairey Hamble Baby, the Campania and IIIs that Fairey Aviation embarked on a period of more than forty years of close association with the Admiralty and the continuous supply of aircraft to the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm. By reason of the very exacting nature of shipboard duties and operation, Fairey aeroplanes have perhaps not been among the world's most exotic aerial creations, yet they came to be regarded with a touching affection by their many thousands of aircrew members down those forty years.

Reversion to equal span wings came in the Fairey IIIC, one example of which was delivered to the Great Yarmouth Royal Naval Air Station a few days before the Armistice. This was once again a three-float seaplane; that is to say that the aircraft was supported on the water by two main floats and a tail float. Sponson floats were attached under the lower wing tips for balancing during taxiing turns. Five aircraft were converted from IIIBs and a further thirty (*N9230–N9259*) were newly built during 1919 for active service with the North Russian Expeditionary Force. Carried to Archangel aboard H.M.S. *Pegasus*, IIICs carried out a number of raids on Bolshevik forces, but it is not known with what British unit they operated.

The IIIC was the first of the series to be powered by the Rolls-Royce Eagle, a 375-h.p. Mk. VIII being installed. The wing structure and planform of this aircraft remained essentially unaltered for fifteen years and was adopted by the next two variants, the IIID and IIIF. Bearing a marked resemblance to the IIIC, the prototype IIIC, *N9450*, was designed in 1919 and first flown by Col. Vincent Nicholl in August 1920 at

Hamble. It was at that time referred to as a IIIC (Improved), and the following 49 aircraft were delayed pending approval of a new Specification, 38/22. All told, 207 IIIDs were built for the Fleet Air Arm serving with the Home Fleet, the Mediterranean Fleet, on the China Station, and with No. 202 Squadron of the Royal Air Force. Later IIIDs were powered by the 450-h.p. Napier Lion IIB, V and VA, and many naval shore establishments possessed one or two wheel-equipped IIIDs. IIIDs also accompanied a task force sent to Shanghai aboard H.M.S. *Argus* in 1927 to safeguard British interests from the attentions of rebel Chinese forces.

Developments in deck operation during the mid 'twenties were slow in materialising. Up to 1926, aircraft were fitted with wheel axle hooks which engaged longitudinal deck wires. This system slowed the aircraft until it arrived at the lift—left "sunk" a few inches below deck level—on which it was lowered to the deck below. Another system used, in conjunction with the longitudinal wires, incorporated wooden flaps, raised to halt the aircraft. As the result of countless broken undercarriages, both procedures were discontinued in 1926 and for several years decks were cleared for "unarrested" landings. New undercarriage design requirements were thus foreshadowed in 1925, by which time the Napier Lion engine had begun to display better compatibility with naval rigours and demands than the Eagle—prompting Faireys to set about a redesign of the IIID.

The new prototype *N198*—the IIIF—was first flown by Captain Norman Macmillan at Northolt on 19th March 1926. The flight, lasting 28 minutes, was carried out with ballast in lieu of second crew member, but the following day Capt. Macmillan took his wife with him—surely ample testimony to the pilot's satisfaction with the new design! This aircraft was the first British design to incorporate in the undercarriage a landing vertical descent rate of 12 ft/sec., for so many years the standard demanded for deck undercarriages. With finely cowled Lion engine and smoothly contoured fuselage the IIIF displayed a classic refinement of the old slab-sided IIID.

After 4 hr. 17 min. flying at Northolt, Macmillan delivered *N198* to Hamble, Avro's old airfield bordering Southampton Water, where the aircraft was converted to a seaplane by the addition of twin metal floats made by Faireys. In this guise the prototype was again flown by Macmillan on 20th April 1926 from Hamble river.

Apart from the Hawker Hart variants, the Fairey IIIF was built in greater numbers than any other British military aircraft between the World Wars until the Hurricane was ordered in 1936. The IIIF Marks

Capt. Norman Macmillan, M.C., A.F.C., Chief Test Pilot, Fairey Aviation Co. Ltd., who tested the IIIF prototype landplane and floatplane. (Photo: Fairey Aviation Co. Ltd.)

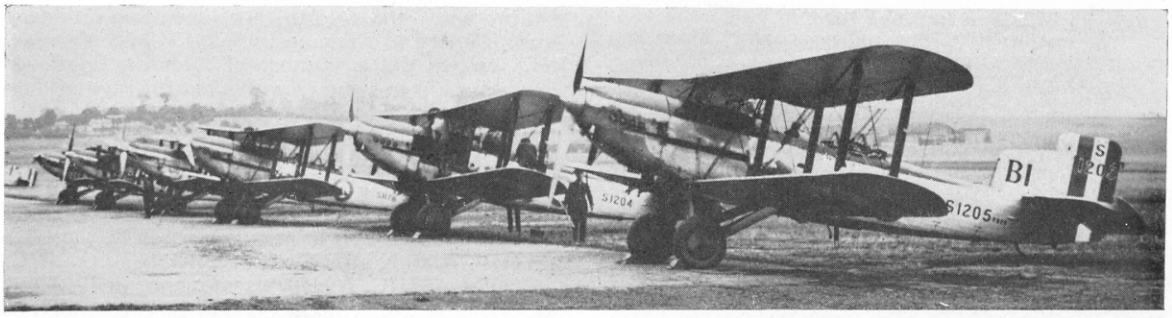
I to III were three-seaters destined for the Fleet Air Arm, whereas the R.A.F.'s* version, the Mark IV was a two-seater. A total of 352 of the former and 243 of the latter was built for the British forces (in addition to a small number for export) between 1926 and 1932.

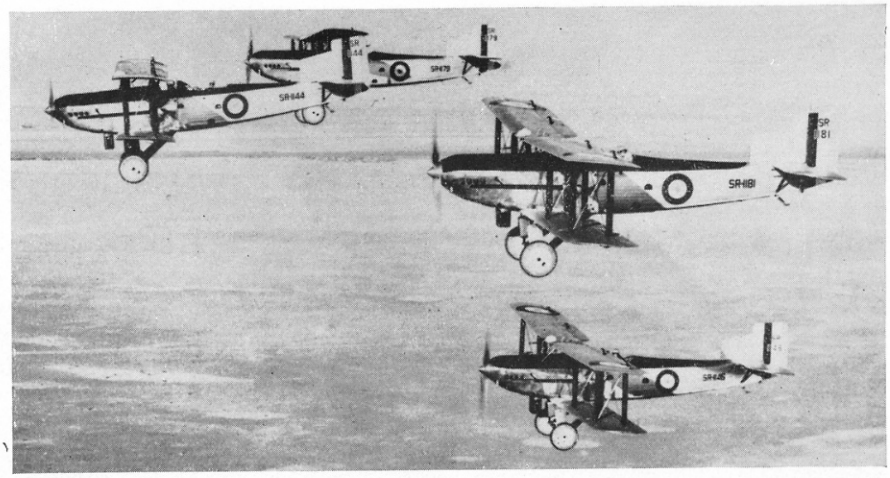
R.A.F. SERVICE

Anomalous within the Fairey IIIF designation, the R.A.F. Mark IV appeared in service *before* the naval versions. This was because the Air Ministry Specification 19/24 was in two parts, the first calling up a two-seat land-based general purpose aircraft to replace the Bristol Fighter in service with overseas R.A.F. Squadrons. Featuring composite construction, i.e. metal fuselage and wooden wings (the whole fabric-covered), the first IIIFs (*J9053–J9077*) to enter R.A.F. service were Mk. IVCs shipped to No. 47 (General Purpose) Squadron at Khartoum, replacing aged Brisfits. Station Commander at Khartoum was Air Commodore C. R. Samson, and this officer led the Squadron in the 1927 Cairo–Cape Town return training flight, a tradi-

* For ease of reference the terms R.A.F. and F.A.A. are used here to distinguish between the traditional land-based air force and the naval air arm of the Royal Navy, though of course throughout the period of Fairey IIIF's main service the Fleet Air Arm was manned and administered almost exclusively under the aegis of the Air Ministry by R.A.F. Officers and Other Ranks.

Early IIIF Mk. IVs of a home squadron (believed No. 35). Most of the aircraft display the angular fin and are ex-naval stock. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)



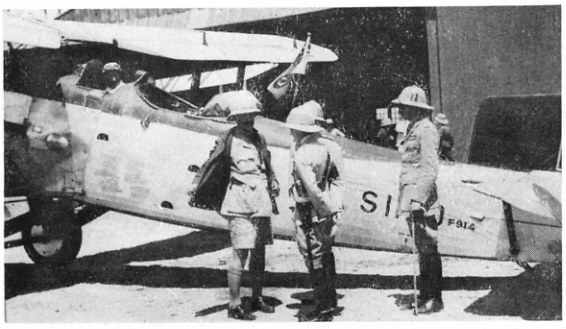


Early IIIFs of a Middle East Squadron flying over the desert. Note the black anti-glare decking adopted by overseas units.
(Photo: Ministry of Defence)

tional goodwill sortie undertaken in turn by R.A.F. squadrons based in the Middle East. No. 47 was among the few amphibious squadrons in the R.A.F. and in 1929 received a number of IIIF floatplanes which operated from the Nile at Khartoum.

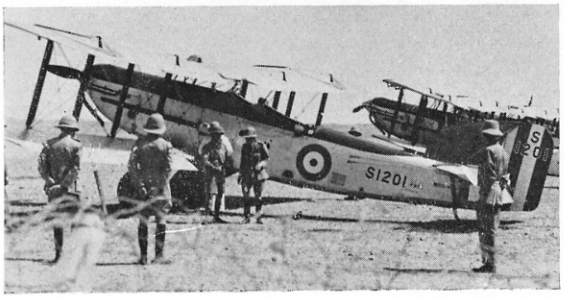
With the transition to metal construction taking place in the R.A.F. in 1927, the next batch of 43 IIIFs consisted of an assortment of composite aircraft. Of these, *J9132–J9139* were referred to as IIIF Mark IVCM in which wooden fuselage stringers were added to the metal fuselage primary structure, and IIIF Mark IVM (*J9140–J9174*) in which the entire structure except the tail ribs was of metal. Most of these aircraft were delivered during 1928 to No. 207 (Bomber) Squadron at Eastchurch, though by then some aircraft (IIIF Mark Is) had been transferred from Fleet Air Arm stocks to make up unit establishment.

From mid-1928 to about 1930 the principal R.A.F. variant of the IIIF was the Mark IVM, though another sub-variant, the Mark IVM/A, appeared in January 1930 with the entire structure of metal (including tail ribs).



Showing the flag—literally. A photo taken in late 'thirties during a visit by an R.A.F. IIIF squadron to South Africa on a goodwill tour. This shows the Squadron Commander being met by a booted and spurred staff officer. Note the R.A.F. ensign aft of the cockpit and the coloured fin. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

Another goodwill visit by No. 47 Squadron in the Middle East. Late series fins are fitted and the nearest aircraft (the Flight Leader's aeroplane) carries wing pennants.
(Photo: Ministry of Defence)



The only other operational home-based IIIF-equipped R.A.F. squadron was No. 35 (Bomber) Squadron which was re-formed at Bircham Newton with D.H.9As in January 1929. In November that year these venerable aeroplanes were joined and eventually replaced by IIIF Mark IVM (GP)s. This squadron was among those that performed the annual set-piece "bombing" at the 1930 Hendon Air Display.

Overseas, however, IIIFs of the R.A.F. wrote themselves a fine piece of Imperial history, ranging across the Middle East and African skies on long training flights over scarcely-mapped desert. No. 47 Squadron again performed the 1928 and 1929 Cairo–Cape Town flights but in 1930 the flight was made by IIIFs of No. 14 (Bomber) Squadron based at Amman in Transjordan.

Three other overseas G.P. squadrons of the R.A.F. flew IIIFs; they were No. 8 Squadron at Khormaksar, Aden (whose aircraft were flown from Aden to Cairo and back in 1932, the flight being led by Sqdn. Ldr. Ralph Sorley); No. 45, who flew IIIFs between September 1929 and February 1936 from Helwan in Egypt, and No. 202 who operated IIIF floatplanes from Kalafrana, Malta.

A final R.A.F. G.P. variant of the IIIF appeared in the Hayes factory in 1930; this was the IIIF Mark IVB, commencing *K1697*, of which 62 examples were built. No precise definition of the IVB exists, and no hard and fast external distinction is made in contemporary handbooks. It was of all-metal construction, possessed naval landing-strength undercarriage mounting points, strongpoints for bomb rack attachments and was strengthened for catapulting. These and other variations were also, however, to be found in previous versions.

It may be of interest to mention briefly the process adopted in supplying IIIFs to the R.A.F. overseas. Most aircraft, on leaving Hayes, were taken on charge by the R.A.F. between 1927 and 1932 at No. 1 Aircraft Storage Unit at Henlow. Thence, if destined for Home Squadrons, the aircraft would be delivered to their bases; but if for overseas destination, the IIIFs were flown to the aircraft Despatch Unit at Sealand where they were crated up for shipment to the A.S.U. at Aboukir. Here they were assembled and either held for training with No. 4 A.F.S. or delivered to squadrons throughout the Middle East. Almost all repair work was carried out at Aboukir, as were the

IIIF Mk. IVs of No. 45 (Bomber) Squadron flying from their Egyptian base at Helwan in 1931. The diagonal fin stripe was vari-coloured according to flight allocation. The hazards of those policing duties are well suggested by the terrain shown in this photograph.
(Photo: Ministry of Defence)

considerable repair programmes. Many IIIFs came to be rebuilt at Aboukir as Fairey Gordons, the principal alterations being to the tail unit and the replacement of engine by a 525-h.p. Armstrong-Siddeley Panther IIA.

Many famous R.A.F. bomber pilots served on IIIF squadrons between the wars; perhaps the best-known, Sir Arthur Harris ("Bomber" Harris of W.W.II fame), as a Wing Commander, in 1932 led a long-range training flight of IIIFs from Heliopolis in Egypt down East Africa and back. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales used a IIIF on No. 24 (Communications) Squadron for many of his official excursions from Northolt, and was intercepted by Siskin fighters during the course of the 1930 Air Defence Exercises.

NAVAL SERVICE

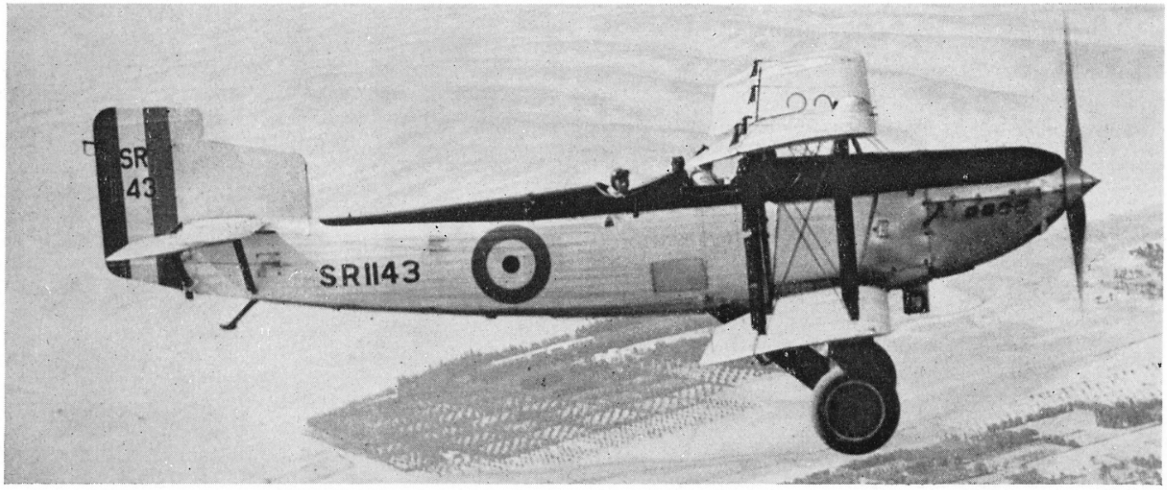
It was undoubtedly in naval service that the IIIF provided the most significant contribution to British aviation history between the wars. Apart from serving with every British aircraft carrier of its day (namely H.M. Carriers *Glorious*, *Courageous*, *Eagle*, *Furious*, *Hermes* and *Argus*), it equipped the battleship *Valiant*, the battlecruiser *Hood*, and the cruisers *York*, *Exeter*, *Norfolk* and *Dorsetshire*, and it served on every naval air station from Lee-on-Solent to the Shanghai racecourse.

Though the first IIIFs first entered R.A.F. squadron service in December 1927, deliveries into naval storage at Gosport commenced before the end of 1926. The aircraft carried a 3-man crew—R.A.F. pilot, naval observer and R.A.F. W/T operator/air gunner—and differed from the earlier IIID in having a "stepped" line to the top of the tail in place of the traditional straight line of previous Fairey aircraft. This outline, formed by the horn balance of the rudder, was retained in early IIIFs, but in late 1927 the familiar smooth elliptic curve was introduced. Some early machines were later retro-modified.

The first ten IIIFs built were in reality IIIDs adapted to meet the requirements of Spec. 19/24, though the later designation applied. These IIIFs (*S1139–S1148*) were delivered to Gosport during the winter of 1926–27 and were used for training purposes, some later being transferred to home-based R.A.F. units. *S1147* was returned to Hayes for modification to two-seat layout and with this became the prototype for the R.A.F.'s General Purpose variant. *S1148* was used for unarrested deck landing trials aboard H.M.S. *Furious* in 1927.

First true IIIFs were Mark Is, *S1168–S1182*, powered by Lion VA engines, the first of the batch being flown by Capt. Macmillan on 18th February 1927. Production of 32 Mark IIs at the Hayes factory got under way during the same year, these being

Illustrating the practice of identifying rebuilt aircraft, this IIIF was the fifth production aircraft (of the original naval contract), was rebuilt as a two-seater, issued to the R.A.F. and re-registered SR1143. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)



Veteran of many itinerant demonstrations, G-AABY, was entered in the 1934 England–Australia race and flown by Fg. Off. C. D. Davies and Lt.-Cdr. C. N. Hill. (Photo: John W. Caler collection)

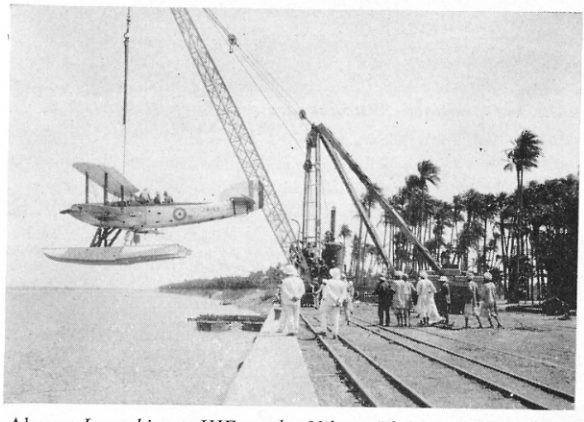
With guns omitted, S1847 *was converted from IIIF Mk. III standard to IIIF (DC) standard. Seen here at Martlesham Heath, this dual-control trainer was evaluated for the Fleet Air Arm—evidenced by the jury strut necessary for wing folding. Significance of the "H" on the fin is not known but may be a relic of a previous unit.* Below: S1847, *frontal view.* (Photos: Ministry of Defence)

fitted with the Lion XI.

While these variants had been developed, the second prototype, *N225*, had undergone considerable modification, being built with all-metal structure thus becoming the Mark III prototype. Production changes to all-metal construction and adoption of the Lion XIA delayed the Mark III, the first production example of which did not fly until 26th March 1929. The Mark III was the most widely-used naval variant, 269 being built; two sub-variants, the IIIF Mark III (DC) dual-control trainer (10 built, *S1454–S1463*) and the Mk. IIIB (79 built, *S1474–S1552*) with strengthened fuselage for catapulting, were also produced.

Although stocks of IIIFs had grown at naval storage units during 1927, it was not until the following year that they entered operational service with the F.A.A. Between 1928 and 1932 IIIFs formed the equipment of twelve Flights, replacing IIIDs on No. 440, 441, 442, 443 and 444 Flights, Avro Bisons on Nos. 447 and 448, Blackburn Blackburns on Nos. 449 and 450, and Blackburn Ripons on No. 460 Flight aboard H.M.S. *Glorious* in the Mediterranean. IIIFs were also supplied to Nos. 445 and 446 Flights as initial equipment. These Flights commenced merging from April 1933, No. 450 Flight becoming No. 820 Squadron; 442 and 449 merged to form No. 822 Squadron, 441 and 448 to become No. 823; 440 and 460 became 825. Of these squadrons, No. 822 in H.M.S. *Furious* kept its IIIFs longest—until 1936—and the IIIF Mark III was not declared obsolete until January 1940. At least one F.A.A. target tug was still airworthy at Hong Kong when the island was attacked by Japan on 8th December 1941. (Reference has been made in several books to IIIFs surviving in Ceylon, Madras, Aden and elsewhere in the Middle East well into W.W.II, but Admiralty and Air Ministry records suggest that the aircraft in question were Fairey Seals and Gordons—direct developments of the IIIF.)

No mention of naval IIIFs should be made without association with C. S. Staniland. Chris Staniland, with Norman Macmillan, performed almost all the manufacturers' development flying between 1928 and 1931; it was Staniland who first flew the IIIF Mark IIIB on 6th June 1930 and went on to do much of the rigorous catapult trials on this variant. Mark IIIBs were issued in seaplane form as well as with wheel undercarriage to the F.A.A., and served on Capital Ships of the Royal Navy until replaced by Hawker Ospreys during 1933. No fewer than eight IIIFs were



Above: *Launching a IIIF on the Nile at Khartoum, May 1930* (Photo: Capt. Norman Macmillan). Below: *Float-equipped IIIFs of No. 47 (Bomber) Squadron in flight during a visit to Malta during the early 'thirties.* (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

Above: *IIIF Mk. IVM floatplanes on the Nile. The second aircraft carries the flight colour on its fin. Note also the variations on float structure.* Below: *IIIF Mk. IVs at Khartoum. (In the picture the farthest aircraft is a Fairey Seal floatplane carrying flight leader's fin colours.)*

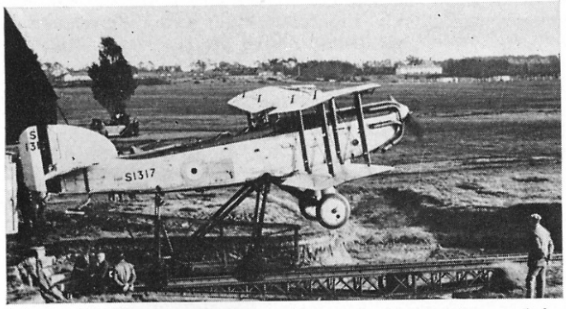
(Photos: Ministry of Defence)

J9061 *of No. 24 (Communications) Squadron at Northolt. This aircraft was used to fly many V.I.P.s round R.A.F. units and featured a special two-seat cockpit layout.* (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

allocated to H. M. Cruiser *York* and five to H.M.S. *Exeter* (later of River Plate fame).

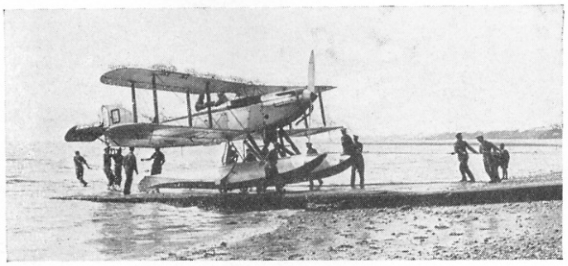
An interesting development of the IIIF was the Fairie Queen. Three such aircraft were modified as radio-controlled aeroplanes with automatic pilot; one of these was shipped to Gibraltar where it served as a target for guns of the Mediterranean Fleet. Various R.N.A.S. at home and overseas also used target-towing IIIFs with windmill-winches on the port side.

Although as already stated, the IIIF was not declared obsolete with the F.A.A. until 1940, they were never considered to be as of "first line" combat effectiveness after the introduction of the Seal and Osprey. Being without arrester gear after the introduction of the transverse deck wires undoubtedly led to slower deck handling owing to the need to recover IIIFs from "all over the flight deck". Although a small number of IIIFs were fitted with arrester hooks, longeron strengthening was necessary and proved more trouble than it was worth.



S1317, *a IIIF Mk. III, was one of several examples used for catapult trials with the Catapult Flight at Leuchars.* (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

Launching a IIIF seaplane on the slipway at Lee-on-Solent. (Photo: via John W. Caler)



IIIFs IN MUFTI

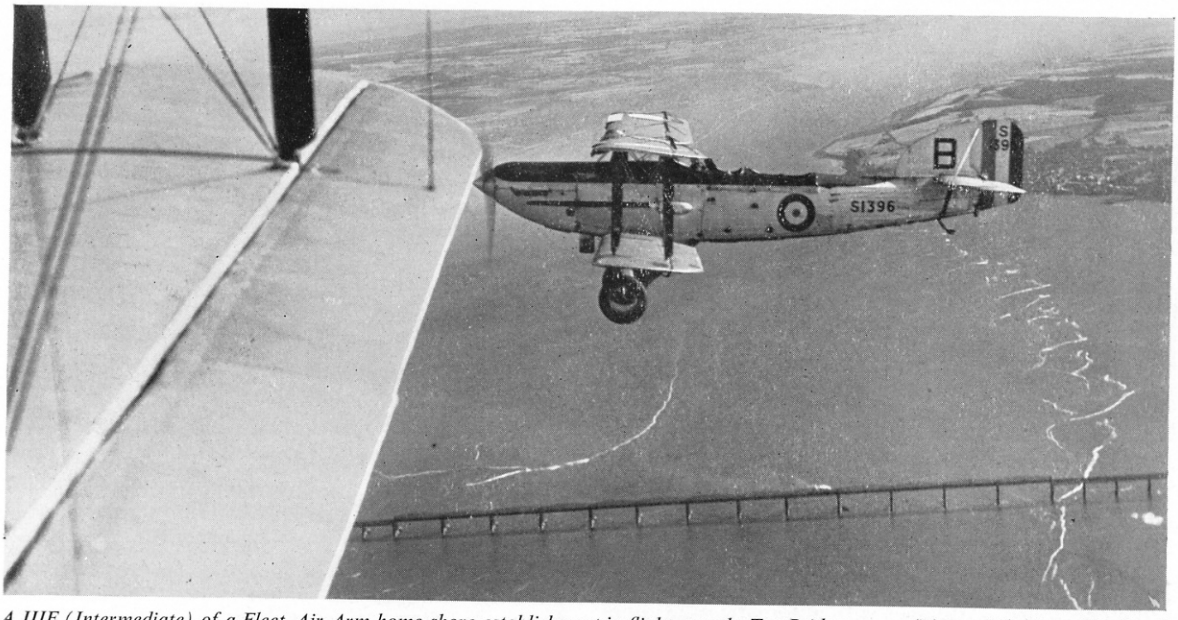
Three IIIFs carried civil markings between 1928 and the mid 'thirties. The first, *G-AABY*, in common with the products of almost every manufacturer during the inter-war years, was a demonstration aircraft specially prepared by the Fairey Aviation Company in 1928–29. After having performed demonstration flights during the 1929 Olympia Aero Show it gave displays in Belgium, Austria, Yugoslavia and Greece in 1930; in the latter country it was converted to a seaplane for demonstration flights. Later it was shipped out to China for demonstration but was damaged and had to be returned home. Rebuilt at North Weald in 1934, it was entered in the handicap section of the MacRobertson Race to Australia, flown by Fg. Off. C. D. Davies and navigated by Lt.-Cdr. C. N. Hill. Trouble dogged the old biplane but, although retired from the Race, it arrived in Australia under its own power; thereafter it was sold (in 1935 as *VH-UTT*) and finally faded into obscurity in the New Guinea goldfields.

The two other civil IIIFs were *G-AASK* and *G-AATT*, powered by Armstrong-Siddeley Jaguar VIC radial engines, and were purchased by Air Survey Co., Ltd., for survey work in the Sudan. Both were delivered during 1930, but *G-AATT* was written off before the end of the year. *G-AASK* survived until 1934 after having performed yeoman service in the unexciting task of aerial mapping.

FLYING THE IIIF

A number of pilots recall flying the IIIF as being a "gentlemanly pursuit", rather as one might talk of following hounds on horseback. Like the horse, the IIIF certainly outlived other modes of transport. It was immensely strong and though it lacked the power to allow tight turns without loss of height, there is no record of a IIIF's wings failing in the air. In fact, the extraordinary strength of the undercarriage was the undoing of many an unwary pilot who, perhaps used to "banging the thing down" on firm grass airfields at home, simply sank axle-deep in the desert airfield sand when trying the same expedient in the Middle East. The IIIF was unforgiving and simply executed a smart *tête-bêche* to the accompaniment of flying sand and much bending of propeller blades.

Perhaps the most oft-repeated remark among pilots' reflections was that relating to the feeling that



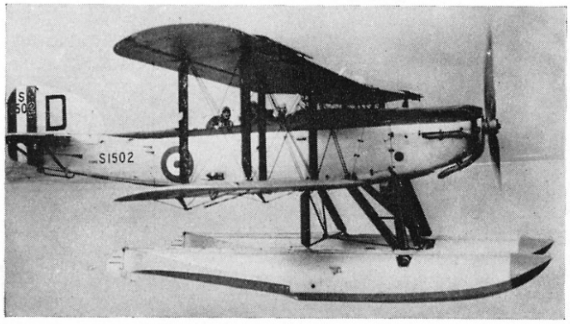
A IIIF (Intermediate) of a Fleet Air Arm home shore establishment in flight over the Tay Bridge. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

one was in the middle of a very large aeroplane, remote from the engine, with wings and struts and things stretching a very long way away. In the F.A.A. the IIIF was a much-liked aeroplane, its very low deck-approach speed of 44 knots bestowing almost viceless landing-on characteristics; indeed when *Glorious* or *Courageous* steamed into a fifteen knot wind, they "took some catching up". Thus landing without arrester gear was scarcely the dangerous pursuit it may have sounded.

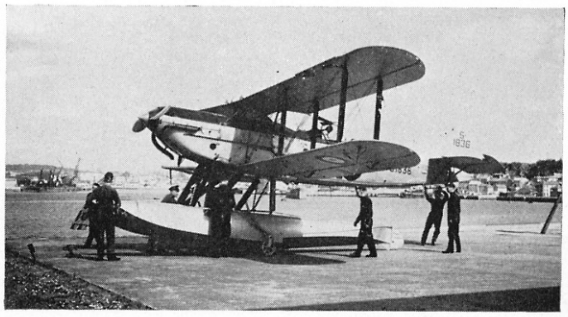
The unkindest task was unquestionably to fly the IIIF with a gunnery target in tow. Apart from the fact that the airspeed seldom achieved 80 m.p.h., target sorties usually dragged on for upwards of five hours, unless a lucky shot attained its mark and removed the target. But the length of the IIIF's fuselage being buffeted by the slipstream of an over-revving Lion engine gave rise to what was known among staff pilots at Sutton Bridge as "Three-F Buttock", a painful affliction caused by correcting the interminable twitching of the fuselage in sympathy with a piece of canvas trailing a quarter-mile astern.

Infinitely more objective are Capt. Norman Macmillan's recollections of the IIIF:

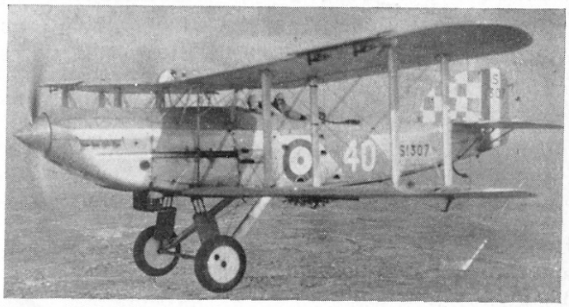
> ". . . All her air controls were powerful, and although she had no stagger (to allow for ease of wing folding), her longitudinal stability was excellent owing to her long fuselage moment with ample tail and elevator surfaces. She carried rudder in flight and this could not be trimmed as no trimmer was fitted; yet I had no difficulty in leaving Northolt one day in London fog and cloud, and climbing up through the murk without blind flying instruments.
>
> "I liked the Lion V; it was freer from vibration than the later up-rated Lions, and it ran very smoothly with the Fairey-Reed metal propeller.
>
> "She was very easy to fly as a floatplane, with excellent water stability and good control even in quite strong winds. Take-off from the water was easy, almost but not quite automatic from the hydroplaning condition, only a slight rear pressure on the controls needed to unstick.
>
> "Aerobatically the IIIF landplane was surprisingly good. She looped with ease. She spun fast, with swift entry when deliberately stalled and ruddered, but she recovered quickly. Floatplane spins were different and at least 1,500 feet altitude above the sea were needed in which to recover level flight.
>
> "When IIIFs were later fitted with Handley Page slots, I found that flight near the stall possessed improved lateral stability, but I also found that it was still possible to spin the landplane, although entry was more difficult. When she did spin, she spun even faster with slots and I found that she spun with one slot open and the other



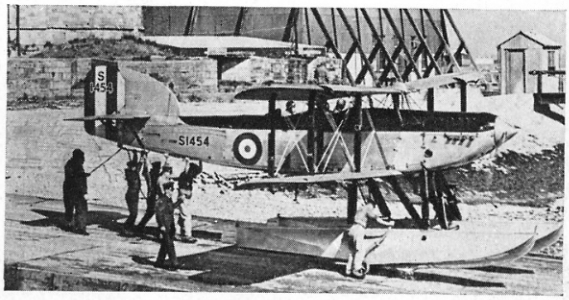
A float-equipped Fairey IIIF Mk. IIIB—surely one of the most unwieldy designations ever applied to a military aeroplane! (Photo: Ministry of Defence)



In the twilight of its front-line life, the IIIF suffered the customary relegation to the indignity of target towing. S1836, *seen here under trial at the Marine Aircraft Establishment, Felixstowe, is reported to have possessed a maximum towing speed of 68 knots (TAS) when equipped with floats! Just visible is the wind-driven winch on the port side of centre cockpit.* (Photo: Ministry of Defence)



Fairey IIIF Mk. III of the Fleet Air Arm serving with the Home Fleet.



Shown here at Calshot—the traditional Mecca of British sea-going aeroplanes—is the first production Fairey IIIF (DC) trainer equipped with floats. (Photo: Ministry of Defence)

closed. It was more difficult to recover from a spin when slots were fitted; more control had to be applied and the recovery was a good deal slower.

"Negative flap gave slightly faster speed when flying full out level, chiefly because it altered the fuselage angle slightly, and probably reduced the drag due to the open rear cockpits. Minus 2 degrees flap was best for top speed, plus 4 degrees for take-off and plus 8 for landing."

The IIIF was a memorable aeroplane, remembered with affection by many. One elderly senior R.A.F. Officer publicly attributed his long life and blameless service to the successive tours spent in flying "the ever-present, innocuous and entirely tractable IIIF". That great airman, Charles Lindbergh, on a visit to England in the late 'twenties when he flew a IIIF from Northolt, recorded otherwise, "A cavernous cockpit filled with nothing but smell and noise and me, supported by great shuddering wings strung together with random struts and wires and string. The engine sounded somehow as if it had been running since the beginning of time, but that it would go on until the end." *Sic transit gloria!*

FAIREY IIIF PRODUCTION

Two prototypes built to Spec. 19/24, *N198* and *N225*.
Naval versions: S1139–S1148, 10 aircraft, IIIF early standard. *S1168–S1207*, 40 aircraft, IIIF Mark I; *S1208–S1227*, 20 aircraft, IIIF Mark II; *S1250–S1262*, 13 aircraft, IIIF Mark II; *S1303–S1356*, 54 aircraft, IIIF Mark III; *S1370–S1408*, 39 aircraft, IIIF (Intermediate); *S1454–S1463*, 10 aircraft, IIIF (DC) trainers; *S1474–S1552*, 79 aircraft, IIIF Mark IIIB; *S1779–S1865*, 87 aircraft, IIIF Mark III, replacements. Total naval production, 352 aircraft.
R.A.F. versions: J9053–J9077, 25 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVM; *J9132–J9174*, 43 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVM (G.P.); *J9637–J9681*, 45 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVM; *J9784–J9831*, 48 aircraft, IIIF Mark IV (G.P.); *K1115–K1121*, 7 aircraft, IIIF Mark IV M/A; *K1158–K1170*, 13 aircraft, IIIF Mark IV M/A (G.P.); *K1697–K1720*, 24 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVB (G.P.); *K1721–K1728*, 8 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVB; *K1749–K1778*, 30 aircraft, IIIF Mark IVB, replacements. Total R.A.F. production, 243 aircraft.

SERVICE ALLOCATION AND OTHER NOTES

Representative allocation to R.A.F. units

No. 8 (Bomber) Squadron, Khormaksar, 1932–33—*J9143, J9664, J9665, K1119, K1121.*
No. 35 (Bomber) Squadron, Bircham Newton, 1930—*J9171, J9784, J9785, J9820, J9821, J9822.*
No. 45 (Bomber) Squadron, Helwan, Egypt, 1930–36—*J9640* (crashed 4/1/36), *J9658, J9659, J9660.*
No. 47 (Bomber) Squadron, Khartoum—*J9153, J9796, J9802, J9809.*
No. 207 (Bomber) Squadron, Eastchurch, 1929—*J9136, J9147, J9651, K1166, K1699.*
No. 1 F.T.S., 1936—*K1752, K1754.*
No. 2 F.T.S., 1933—*K1774.*
No. 4 F.T.S., 1934—*J9172*, 1936—*K1759*; 1941—*K1162.*
No. 14 Squadron, N.O.U.E.*—*J9812, J9813, J9819.*
Central Flying School, 1931—*K1168.*
Armament Practice Camp, Sutton Bridge, 1934—*K1774.*
Anti-Aircraft School, 1933—*J9681.*
Armament and Gunnery School, 1931—*K1159, K1163.*
No. 2 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit, 1938—*K1726* (S.O.C. 10/3/41).
No. 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron, A.A.F., 1937—*K1752.*
Other Notes: Aircraft rebuilt as Gordons—*J9161, J9174, J9642* (crashed 3/2/36), *J9648, J9651, J9785, J9788, J9801, J9963, K1715* (sold to New Zealand, 1939); *J9154* referred to as IIIF Mark V, and thus Gordon prototype. *J9173* fitted with Rolls-Royce F.XI engine, 10/28.

**Not on Unit Establishment.*

Naval Units equipped with IIIFs.

No. 440 Flight, H.M.S. *Hermes*, China Station.
No. 441 Flight, H.M.S. *Argus*, China Station; H.M.S. *Glorious*, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 442 Flight, H.M.S. *Furious*, Home Fleet, and R.N.A.S. Gosport.
No. 443 Flight, R.N.A.S. Lee-on-Solent; H.M.S. *Furious*, Home Fleet; Catapult Flight, West Indies and South Africa.
No. 444 Flight, R.N.A.S. Lee-on-Solent; Catapult Flight, Home Fleet (Capital Ships).
No. 445 Flight, H.M.S. *Courageous*, Mediterranean and Home Fleets.
No. 446 Flight, H.M.S. *Courageous*, Mediterranean and Home Fleets.
No. 447 Flight, H.M.S. *Furious*, Home Fleet; H.M.S. *Glorious*, Mediterranean Fleet; 1st Cruiser Squadron and Capital Ships, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 448 Flight, H.M.S. *Eagle* and *Gloroius*, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 449 Flight, H.M.S. *Courageous* and *Furious*, Home Fleet.
No. 450 Flight, H.M.S. *Courageous*, Home Fleet.
No. 460 Flight, H.M.S. *Glorious*, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 820 Squadron, H.M.S. *Courageous*, Home Fleet.
No. 822 Squadron, H.M.S. *Furious*, Home Fleet.
No. 823 Squadron, H.M.S. *Glorious*, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 824 Squadron, H.M.S. *Eagle*, Mediterranean Fleet.
No. 825 Squadron, H.M.S. *Glorious*, Mediterranean Fleet.

SPECIFICATION

Fairey IIIF Mark IIIB and IV (in brackets)

General description: 3-seat naval spotter reconnaissance aircraft (2-seat General Purpose bomber).
Powerplant: 570-h.p. Napier Lion XIA (570-h.p. Napier Lion XIA) driving 2-blade Fairey Reed fixed-pitch metal propeller.
Dimensions: Span 45 ft. 9 in. (45 ft. 9 in.); length 34 ft. 4 in. (36 ft. 8⅝ in.); height 14 ft. 2¾ in. (14 ft. 2⅜ in.); wing area 443·5 sq. ft. (438·5 sq. ft.).
Weights: Empty 3,923 lb. (3,790 lb.); loaded 6,301 lb. (6,041 lb.).
Performance: Maximum speed 120 m.p.h. (120 m.p.h.) at 10,000 ft.; climb 6·4 minutes (6·0 minutes) to 5,000 ft.
Armament: (same for both versions) one fixed forward-firing synchronised Vickers Mark I 0·303-in. machine gun on port side of nose; provision for Lewis gun on Scarff ring or Fairey high-speed mounting on gunner's cockpit. Provision for up to 500 pounds of bombs under wings.

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