

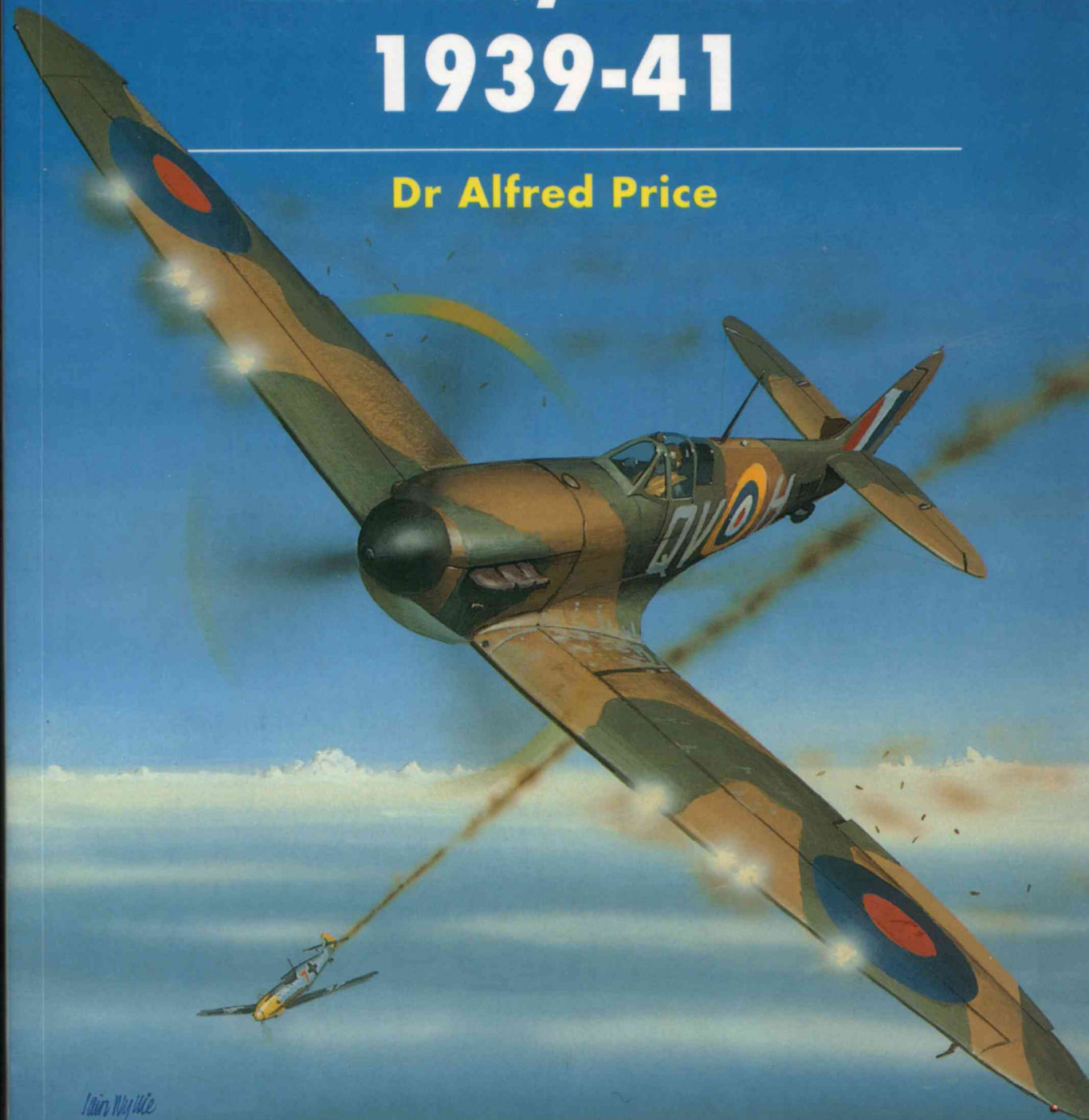


OSPREY AIRCRAFT OF THE ACES • 12



Spitfire Mark I/II Aces 1939-41

Dr Alfred Price



Iain Whyte

COLOUR PLATES



1
Mk IIA P7966/D-B of Wg Cdr Douglas Bader, OC Tangmere Wing, March 1941



2
Mk I K9854/QV-W of Flt Lt Wilfred Clouston, No 19 Sqn, Duxford, March 1940



3
Mk IB R6776/QV-H of Flt Sgt George Unwin, No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, August 1940



4
Mk I P9386/QV-K of Sqn Ldr Brian Lane, OC No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, September 1940



5

Mk IIA P7849/QV-J *Armagh* of Flt Lt Walter Lawson, No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, June 1941



6

Mk IIA P7666/EB-Z *OBSERVER CORPS* of Sqn Ldr Donald Finlay, OC No 41 Sqn, Hornchurch, November 1940



7

Mk I N3173/KL-N of Plt Off Colin Gray, No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940



8

Mk I N3183/KL-B *KIWI* of Plt Off Alan Deere, No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940



9
Mk I P9389/KL-A of Sqn Ldr James Leathart, OC No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940



10
Mk I P9554/K-SH of Plt Off James O'Meara, No 64 Sqn, Kenley, August 1940



11
Mk I K9906/FZ-L of Flt Lt Robert Stanford Tuck, No 65 Sqn, Hornchurch, August 1939



12
Mk I N3035/LZ-X of Plt Off Hubert Allen, No 66 Sqn, Kenley, September 1940



13

Mk I X4321/LZ-F of Plt Off Crelin 'Bogle' Bodie, No 66 Sqn, Kenley, September 1940



14

Mk IIA P7308/XR-D of Plt Off William Dunn, No 71 'Eagle' Sqn, North Weald, August 1941



15

Mk I (serial unknown)/RN-J of Flt Lt Desmond Sheen, No 72 Sqn, Acklington, August 1940



16

Mk I K9953/ZP-A of Flt Lt Adolf Malan, No 74 Sqn, Hornchurch, May/June 1940



17
Mk IIA P8194/DL-M *Gold Coast I* of Sgt Donald McKay, No 91 Sqn, Hawkinge, April 1941



18
Mk I R6596/QJ-S of Plt Off Alan Wright, No 92 Sqn, Pembrey, August 1940



19
Mk I N3249/QJ-P of Sgt Ralph Havercroft, No 92 Sqn, Pembrey, August 1940



20
Mk IB R6908/QJ-F of Flt Lt Brian Kingcome, No 92 Sqn, Biggin Hill, November 1940



21

Mk I X4036/D-AZ of Plt Off Robert Doe, No 234 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940



22

Mk II P8081/DU-R GARFIELD WESTON IV of Flt Lt Adolphe Vybiral, No 312 'Czech' Sqn, Ayr, November 1941



23

Mk I L1004/LO-Q of Sqn Ldr Alexander 'Sandy' Johnstone, OC No 602 Sqn, Drem, June 1940



24

Mk I L1019/LO-G of Sgt Basil Whall, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, August 1940



25
Mk I X4382/LO-G of Plt Off Osgood Hanbury, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, September 1940



26
Mk I X4541/LO-M of Sgt Cyril Babbage, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, October 1940



27
Mk I L1067/XT-D of Sqn Ldr George Denholm, OC No 603 Sqn, Aberdeen/Dyce, March 1940



28
Mk I R6835/XT-W of Flg Off Brian Carbury, No 603 Sqn, Hornchurch, August 1940



29
Mk I X4277/XT-M of Flg Off Richard Hillary, No 603 Sqn, Hornchurch



30
Mk I N3288/XT-H of Plt Off George Gilroy, No 603 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940



31
Mk I X4250/XT-X of Sgt Jack Stokoe, No 603 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940



32
Mk I P9322/PR-L of Plt Off David Crook, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, July 1940



33
Mk I R6690/PR-Q of Flg Off John Dundas, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940



34
Mk I R6691/PR-J of Flt Lt Frank Howell, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940



35
Mk IIA P8098/PR-Z *ENFIELD SPITFIRE* of Flt Lt John Curchin, No 609 Sqn, Biggin Hill, May 1941



36
Mk IIA P8264/PR-H of Flg Off John Bisdee, No 609 Sqn, Biggin Hill, May 1941



37

Mk I R6806/DW-N of Flt Lt John Ellis, No 610 Sqn, Biggin Hill, July 1940



38

Mk I P9433/DW-E of Plt Off Constantine Pegge, No 610 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940



39

Mk I X4253/N-FY of Sgt Wilfred Duncan-Smith, No 611 Sqn, Rochford, December 1940



40

Mk IIA P7531/L-Z-I of Flt Lt Charles Green, No 421 Flt, Hawkinge, November 1940

No 12 Group, HQ Watnall, Nottinghamshire

Duxford Sector		
No 19 Sqn	14	(0) Fowlmere
Coltishall Sector		
No 74 Sqn	14	(8) Coltishall
Wittering Sector		
No 266 Sqn	14	(5) Wittering
Digby Sector		
No 611 Sqn	17	(1) Digby
Kirton-in-Lindsey Sector		
No 616 Sqn	14	(4) Kirton-in-Lindsey
No 64 Sqn	7	(3) Leconfield
	6	(3) Ringway
<hr/>		
Group Total	86	(24)

No 13 Group, HQ Newcastle, Northumberland

Catterick Sector		
No 54 Sqn	15	(2) Catterick
Usworth Sector		
No 610 Sqn	14	(5) Acklington
Turnhouse Sector		
No 65 Sqn	15	(5) Turnhouse
<hr/>		
Group Total	44	(12)

Spitfires held at Maintenance Units

Ready for Immediate Issue	47
Ready for Issue in Four Days	10

Spitfires held by

Operational Training Units	26 (24)
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Spitfire production in the week prior to 14 September

38

COLOUR PLATES

1

Mk IIA P7966/D-B of Wg Cdr Douglas Bader, OC Tangmere Wing, March 1941

This aircraft was one of the first to carry the Wing Leader's initials on the fuselage – it was also a presentation Spitfire, wearing the legend *Manxman* below the cockpit on its starboard side. At the time Bader was taken prisoner in August 1941 his victory score stood at 20 and 4 shared destroyed, 6 and 1 shared probably destroyed and 11 damaged. Issued initially to No 616 Sqn (part of Bader's Wing), this aircraft later served with Nos 412 and 154 Sqn. It was then spent time with Nos 61 and 52 OTUs in 1942, before crashing the following October whilst serving with the latter unit.

2

Mk I K9854/QV-W of Flt Lt Wilfred Clouston, No 19 Sqn, Duxford, October 1939

K9854 was damaged in a mid-air collision and the subsequent crash landing in October 1939, being reduced to components following the accident. Clouston went on to fight in the Battle of Britain, and his score reached 9 and 3 shared destroyed, one and one shared probably destroyed and one shared damaged. In 1941 he was posted to Singapore to command a fighter squadron, but was taken prisoner when the fortress fell and spent the rest of the war in captivity.

3

Mk IB R6776/QV-H of Flt Sgt George Unwin, No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, August 1940

This aircraft was one of the original cannon-armed Spitfire IBs issued to No 19 Sqn for a brief period in the summer of 1940. Unlike the majority of the unit's pilots, who struggled with the reliability of the twin cannon armament in their Mk IBs, Unwin enjoyed some success in this aircraft, claiming a Bf 110 destroyed and another probably destroyed on 16 August, followed by a third Bf 110 confirmed on 3 September. Later modified into a Mk VB, it went on to serve with Nos 92, 316 and 306 Sqn, before being written off in May 1942 after sustaining Category E battle damage on a sweep over France.

4

Mk I P9386/QV-K of Sqn Ldr Brian Lane, OC No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, September 1940

Lane was flying this aircraft on 7 September when he shot down a Bf 110 of Stab II./ZG 2 near North Weald – it was also used by No 19 Sqn ace Flt Lt Walter Lawson to down a Bf 110 two days later, and a He 111 on 11 September. After a brief period with No 152 Sqn, the Spitfire went to No 58 OTU in 1941, and continued to perform second line tasks until it was written off in May 1944 whilst serving with No 57 OTU. As this profile shows, P9386 stood out from other Battle of Britain period Spitfires thanks to its non-standard yellow prop spinner – reputedly a hangover from its brief OTU service.

5

Mk IIA P7849/QV-J *Armagh* of Flt Lt Walter Lawson, No 19 Sqn, Fowlmere, June 1941

Lawson used this aircraft on 27 June to shoot down a Bf

109E confirmed and claim a second *Emil* as a probable near St Omer – No 19 Sqn's first kills in seven months. Later, the Spitfire was converted into a Mk V, and in November 1942 transferred to the USAAF. Walter 'Farmer' Lawson claimed 6 and 1 shared destroyed, 3 probables and 1 damaged during his 16 months with No 19 Sqn. Given command of the unit in July 1941 following Sqn Ldr Lane's departure, Lawson was posted missing on a sortie to Rotterdam on 28 August.

6

Mk IIA P7666/EB-Z OBSERVER CORPS of Sqn Ldr Donald Finlay, OC No 41 Sqn, Hornchurch, November 1940

Finlay was flying this aircraft on 23 November when he was credited with the destruction of a Bf 109E near Tonbridge – he got a second *Emil* over the same area in P7666 four days later. Don Finlay finished the war with 4 and 2 shared destroyed and 3 and 1 damaged, all on Spitfires. P7666 later served with No 54 Sqn, and was shot down by a Bf 109 whilst being flown by Spitfire ace Plt Off Jack Stokoe (7 and 1 shared destroyed, 2 and 1 shared probable, 4 damaged) on 20 April 1941 – he had just downed a Bf 110 prior to falling victim to the JG 51 machine.

7

Mk I N3173/KL-N of Plt Off Colin Gray, No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940

Gray was flying this aircraft over Dunkirk on 25 May 1940 (as described in the text) when he claimed a Bf 109E probably destroyed, but was himself nearly shot down. He brought the Spitfire back to Hornchurch with severe battle damage, and after being repaired it was issued to No 152 Sqn at Warmwell, in Dorset. On 20 September it was being flown by Australian Sgt K C Holland who, after mortally damaging a He 111P of 6./KG 55, made the fatal mistake of closing in on his quarry to check on his aim and was shot down and killed.

8

Mk I N3183/KL-B K/II of Plt Off Alan Deere, No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940

Deere used this aircraft to shoot down a Bf 109E (24 May) and a Bf 110 (25 May) during actions in support of the Dunkirk evacuation, where he was credited with seven victories (plus 1 shared, 1 unconfirmed and 1 damaged) in just five days. The aircraft was shot down by elements of II./JG 51 in a bitter action over the Channel on 9 July 1940, its pilot, Plt Off A Evershed, being killed – No 54 Sqn lost two other Spitfires in this action, with a second pilot being killed and Al Deere being slightly burnt when he had to force land P9398 near Manston.

9

Mk I P9389/KL-A of Sqn Ldr James Leathart, OC No 54 Sqn, Hornchurch, May 1940

'Prof' Leathart was flying this aircraft on 21 May when he engaged a He 111 near Dunkirk during one of the first engagements by Spitfires over northern France – he was awarded an unconfirmed kill for the Heinkel. Leathart led No 54 Sqn throughout the summer of 1940, and eventually finished the war with a tally of 7 and 1 shared destroyed, 3 and 1 shared unconfirmed, 2 probables and 3 damaged – all bar one of his kills was scored flying Spitfire Mk Is. P9389 was shot down by a Bf 109 during the afternoon of 24 August

1940, its pilot, Kiwi Plt Off C Stewart, baling out at 20,000 ft and landing safely in the Thames Estuary.

10

Mk I P9554/K-SH of Plt Off James O'Meara, No 64 Sqn, Kenley, August 1940

While flying this aircraft between 12/15 August 1940, O'Meara was credited with three enemy aircraft destroyed (two Bf 109Es and a Ju 88) and three (He 111s) damaged – he finished the war with 11 and 2 shared destroyed, 1 unconfirmed destroyed, 4 probables and 11 and 1 shared damaged. On 16 August the aircraft was flown by No 64 Sqn OC, Sqn Ldr Donald MacDonnell (9 and 1 shared destroyed, 3 unconfirmed destroyed, 1 probable and 7 damaged), who claimed one Bf 109E destroyed, a second as a probable and a third *Emil* damaged, a half share in a He 111 destroyed and a second Heinkel damaged during action over Kent. Heading back to Hawkinge, his ammunition exhausted, MacDonnell was jumped by a Bf 109 and forced to bale out of P9554.

11

Mk I K9906/FZ-L of Flt Lt Robert Stanford Tuck, No 65 Sqn, Hornchurch, August 1939

This aircraft later served with No 64 Sqn during the Battle of Britain before being retired to second line duties with No 7 OTU. It was one of a number of Mk Is converted into PR IIIs for the photo recce role and issued to No 1 PRU at RAF Benson. Tuck was the first Spitfire ace, scoring his fourth and fifth kills (both Do 17s) over Dunkirk on 24 May 1940.

12

Mk I N3035/LZ-X of Plt Off Hubert Allen, No 66 Sqn, Kenley, September 1940

'Dizzy' Allen (5 and 3 shared destroyed, 2 and 1 shared probable and 3 and 1 shared damaged) flew this machine on numerous occasions during the summer of 1940, the Spitfire having been delivered to the unit at Duxford in September 1939. It suffered serious damage in a dogfight over Kent on 29 September whilst being flown by Sgt Peter Willcocks, taking ten months to repair. Ironically, the latter lost his life when his Spitfire collided with a similar machine flown by Plt Off Allen during a patrol over Kent on 28 November 1940.

13

Mk I X4321/LZ-F of Plt Off Crelin 'Bogle' Bodie, No 66 Sqn, Kenley, September 1940

'Bogle' Bodie (5 and 5 shared destroyed, 1 unconfirmed destroyed, 8 and 2 shared probables, 3 and 1 damaged) made a forced landing in this aircraft on 7 September near Hawkinge following combat with Bf 109s off Dover – It had only flown for the first time just nine days before. Although initially struck off charge as having been too badly damaged, X4321 was sent to Heston Aircraft Limited where repairs were effected. By December 1940 the fighter had been restored to its former glory, and went on to serve with Nos 64 and 303 Sqn, before being issued No 58 OTU. It ended its days with this unit in a flying accident in 1942.

14

Mk IIA P7308/XR-D of Plt Off William Dunn, No 71 'Eagle' Sqn, North Weald, August 1941

On 27 August Dunn was flying this aircraft (as part of 100-strong Spitfire escort force for nine Blenheims attacking the steelworks at Lille) when he claimed two Bf 109Fs destroyed (out of an attacking force of 30), making him the first 'Eagle' squadron pilot to achieve five victories – three on Hurricane IIs – and therefore the first American ace of the war. During the same engagement his own aircraft was hit, losing its right wingtip and having its rudder shot up, whilst Dunn suffered wounds to his foot and right leg – after months in hospital, he went on to fly with the USAAF's 406th FG on P-47Ds, raising his score to 9 destroyed, 3 unconfirmed destroyed and 1 and 1 shared probable. P7308 had served with Nos 74, 54 and 308 Sqns prior to being issued to the Americans in August 1941. It was converted into a Mk VA whilst being repaired, and later served with Nos 133, 421, 164 and 602 Sqns, before ending its days with No 61 OTU in July 1943.

15

Mk I (serial unknown)/RN-J of Flt Lt Desmond Sheen, No 72 Sqn, Acklington, August 1940

This aircraft wears Des Sheen's distinctive boomerang badge on its cockpit entry hatch. Whilst flying an earlier production Mk I (K9959) emblazoned with this unique marking, the Australian pilot shot down a He 115 on 21 October 1939 and claimed a third of a kill against a He 111 on 7 December that same year – the fighter (and the pilot) was hit during this latter engagement.

16

Mk I K9953/ZP-A of Flt Lt Adolf Malan, No 74 Sqn, Hornchurch, May/June 1940

Malan was flying this aircraft on 27 May when he claimed a Bf 109E destroyed, two Do 17s damaged and an unconfirmed half kill over a third Dornier bomber near Calais – the final claim was shared with Plt Off P C F Stevenson (2 shared destroyed, 6 unconfirmed destroyed and 5 damaged). He also used K9953 during the remarkable action on the night of 18/19 June, as described in chapter one, when he shot down two He 111s from KG 4. After the Battle of Britain the aircraft went to No 7 OTU, before being passed on to No 57 OTU, where it was wrecked in a collision on 7 October 1943.

17

Mk IIA P8194/DL-M *Gold Coast I* of Sgt Donald McKay, No 91 Sqn, Hawkinge, April 1941

Flying Spitfire Mk Is and IIAs, McKay was credited with 6 enemy aircraft destroyed and three damaged – his total victory score was 14 enemy aircraft destroyed and 4 damaged. This presentation aircraft later served with Nos 234, 66 and 152 Sqns. After a spell with No 57 OTU, this Spitfire was employed in trials in 1943 with a reversible-pitch propeller to shorten the landing run. It was written off in March 1944.

18

Mk I R6596/QJ-S of Plt Off Alan Wright, No 92 Sqn, Pembrey, August 1940

Throughout his operational career, Wright's personal aircraft always carried the identification letter 'S'. He was flying this aircraft on the night of 14/15 August when he shared in the destruction of a He 111P of 9/KG 27 sent to bomb Cardiff docks. Two of the other three pilots also credited with

destroying this bomber were aces with No 92 Sqn – Flt Lt R S Tuck and Plt Off D G Williams (5 and 1 shared destroyed, 1 and 1 unconfirmed destroyed, 2 probables and 6 damaged). Wright's final score was 11 and 3 shared destroyed, 2 'possibly destroyed', 5 probables and 7 damaged. Aside from the shared He 111, Wright also used R6596 to down a second Heinkel at night on 29 August and a third during the day on 11 September – he also claimed a Bf 109E probable on this latter date. Late in the afternoon of 9 September 1940 Wright was bounced by Bf 109Es whilst patrolling over Biggin Hill, and he only just managed to land the badly damaged R6596 back at base. Following repairs, it spent a few months with No 131 Sqn during 1941, before going to No 52 OTU in October. It was written off whilst with No 57 OTU in April 1944.

19

Mk I N3249/QJ-P of Sgt Ralph Havercroft, No 92 Sqn, Pembrey, August 1940

Delivered to No 92 Sqn in late December 1939 as one of the first Spitfires issued to the unit as replacements for their Blenheim IFs, this aircraft was damaged during a night landing at Bibury on 31 August, but was repaired and allocated to No 602 Sqn in early November. It was lost whilst serving with this unit in Scotland on 14 February 1941. 'Titch' Havercroft's final score was 3 and 1 shared destroyed, 2 unconfirmed destroyed, 1 and 1 shared probable and 3 damaged.

20

Mk IB R6908/QJ-F of Flt Lt Brian Kingcome, No 92 Sqn, Biggin Hill, November 1940

One of the first Spitfires to go into service fitted with a mixed cannon and machine gun armament, this aircraft was later converted to Mk V standard. After suffering damage in a low-level engagement over the Channel in one of the first actions involving Bf 109Fs (of Stab./JG 53) on 9 May 1941, R6908 was crash-landed back at Biggin Hill by its wounded pilot, Plt Off Maitland-Thompson, and written off. Brian Kingcome's wartime score was 8 and 3 shared destroyed, 1 shared unconfirmed destroyed, 5 probables and 13 damaged.

21

Mk I X4036/D-AZ of Plt Off Robert Doe, No 234 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940

Although flown on numerous occasions during the summer of 1940 by Bob Doe, this machine was also used on the afternoon of 18 August by leading No 234 Sqn ace Flg Off Patterson Hughes to down two Bf 109Es (of 1./JG 27) off the Isle of Wight. Doe also claimed one *Emil* destroyed and one damaged during this action, the German fighters attempting to protect a large formation of Ju 87s sent to knock out the CH radar station at Poling, in West Sussex, and several naval airfields on the south coast. X4036 later served with No 66 Sqn in the spring of 1941, before passing to No 52 OTU.

22

Mk II P8081/DU-R *GARFIELD WESTON IV* of Flt Lt Adolphe Vybiral, No 312 'Czech' Sqn, Ayr, November 1941

Adolphe Vybiral escaped from Czechoslovakia and joined the French Air Force, and during the Battle of France was credited with downing seven aircraft whilst flying Curtiss Hawk 75

fighters. He escaped to England and joined No 312 Sqn, which he later commanded. Prior to being issued to the Czechs, P8081 had seen service with Nos 222 and 452 Sqn.

23

Mk I L1004/LO-Q of Sqn Ldr Alexander 'Sandy' Johnstone, OC No 602 Sqn, Drem, June 1940

Johnstone was flying this aircraft on the night of 25/26 June when he shot down a He 111H-3 of 3./KG 26 near Dunbar. Five days later he was credited with a shared kill (again in L1004) after mortally damaging a I./KG 51 Ju 88, the other pilot involved in the action being Flg Off P Webb (3 and 3 shared destroyed and 5 damaged). On 3 July he used the machine to damage a Do 17 – Johnstone's finally tally was 7 and 2 shared destroyed, 1 probable and 6 and 1 shared damaged. After a year in the frontline, L1004 spent time with No 58 OTU before being modified into a Mk V in mid-1941. Later still it became the second prototype PR Mk XIII, before being re-configured in early 1944 as the Seafire Mk III prototype.

24

Mk I L1019/LO-G of Sgt Basil Whall, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, August 1940

Whall was flying this aircraft on the afternoon of 18 August when he shot down two Ju 87B-1s of II. and III./StG 77 that had attacked Ford airfield. Whilst attacking the second Stuka, L1019 took hits to the engine from the dive-bomber's rear gunner and Whall was forced to ditch the aircraft in shallow water off Bognor Regis. Basil Whall died from injuries received whilst attempting to crash land battle damaged X4160 following combat with a Ju 88 off Beachy Head on 7 October 1940 – his score then stood at 7 destroyed and 2 shared destroyed and 1 and 1 shared probably destroyed.

25

Mk I X4382/LO-G of Plt Off Osgood Hanbury, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, September 1940

Hanbury used X4382 to destroy a Bf 110 near Beachy Head on 15 September, half a Ju 88 over Tangmere on 21 September and a second Ju 88 on 30 September near Selsey-Bembridge. His final score was 10 and 2 shared, 2 probables and 3 and 2 damaged. In December 1940 X4382 was passed to No 610 Sqn for a few months before becoming an OTU aircraft – it had one final 'fling' in the frontline, however, serving for several weeks with No 412 'Falcon' Sqn, RCAF, in July/August 1941. It was struck off charge in January 1945.

26

Mk I X4541/LO-M of Sgt Cyril Babbage, No 602 Sqn, Westhampnett, October 1940

Babbage was flying this aircraft on 12 October when he shared in the destruction of a Ju 88A-1 of II./LG 1 with Canadian Flg Off J S Hart off Beachy Head. Both Spitfires were hit by return fire, however, and X4541 ended up on its back in a field in Sussex following Babbage's forced landing – although the fighter was a write off, the pilot was unhurt. Babbage's final wartime tally was 7 and 1 shared destroyed, 2 and 1 shared probables and 2 damaged.

27

Mk I L1067/XT-D of Sqn Ldr George Denholm, OC No 603

Sqn, Aberdeen/Dyce, March 1940

Denholm saw considerable action in this Spitfire between March and August 1940, damaging a Do 17 on 17 March, followed by an unconfirmed kill over a He 111 on 26 June, a third of a kill against another 'He 111' (actually a Ju 88) on 3 July and a Bf 109E probable on 28 August. Two days later he baled out of L1067 following combat with Bf 110Cs of II./ZG 76 over Deal, but was back in action the following day. Denholm's final score was 3 and 3 shared destroyed, 1 unconfirmed destroyed, 3 and 1 shared probables and 6 damaged.

28

Mk I R6835/XT-W of Flg Off Brian Carbury, No 603 Sqn, Hornchurch, August 1940

Possibly the most successful pilot/aircraft combination in Fighter Command in the summer of 1940, Carbury used R6835 to shoot down eight Bf 109Es between 29 August and 2 September, with five of these kills being scored during three patrols flown on 31 August – he had built up to this 'ace in a day' feat by claiming single *Emils* on the 29th and 30th. During the final combat in the early evening of the 31st, No 603 Sqn tangled with elements of I./JG 3 over the Thames Estuary, and after claiming two Bf 109s Carbury's Spitfire was hit by a 20 mm round which knocked out its compressed air system. Badly damaged by an exploding oxygen bottle, R6835 took ten months to repair, and was finally reissued to No 457 Sqn (RAAF) in June 1941. It then served with various OTUs, before being passed to the Fleet Air Arm in May 1943.

29

Mk I X4277/XT-M of Flg Off Richard Hillary, No 603 Sqn, Hornchurch

Australian Hillary also met with success on 31 August when he used this aircraft to down a Bf 109 over Dungeness – he had inadvertently formed up with a formation of *Emils* thinking they were Hurricanes after becoming separated from his own unit! After downing one fighter, he bade a hasty retreat undetected. Hillary scored three more kills over *Emils*, and claimed one as a probable and one damaged, in X4277 before being shot down in flames in the fighter off Margate on 3 September by Hauptmann Bode of II./JG 26. Badly burned, Hillary somehow managed to bail out of the stricken fighter and was rescued by the Margate lifeboat. During his many months in hospital recovering from his severe facial burns he wrote *The Last Enemy*, describing his training, experience in combat and subsequent recovery – upon its release in 1942 it became an instant classic on the Battle of Britain period. His victory score was 5 enemy aircraft destroyed, 2 probably destroyed and 1 damaged, all during the Battle. Hillary was killed in a Blenheim crash on 8 January 1943.

30

Mk I N3288/XT-H of Plt Off George Gilroy, No 603 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940

Gilroy was also successfully involved in No 603 Sqn's hectic day of action on 31 August, using this fighter to claim a Bf 109 destroyed – the combination had earlier downed an *Emil* over Kent two days previously. Gilroy's score by war's end stood at 14 and 10 shared destroyed, 2 shared probables, 5 and 4 shared damaged and 3 shared destroyed on the ground. N3288 went on to serve with Nos 609, 65, 145 and

123 Sqn, before being retired to No 58 OTU in November 1941. In February 1943 it became an instructional airframe, and was finally struck off charge in May 1945.

31

Mk I X4250/XT-X of Sgt Jack Stokoe, No 603 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940

Stokoe also claimed a Bf 109 on the evening patrol over the Thames Estuary on 31 August when he used X4250 to down E-4 Werk-Nr 1503 of 3./JG 3, flown by Oberleutnant W Binder – he was credited with a second *Emil* as having been probably destroyed. This Spitfire was written off in a forced landing on Folkstone beach on 27 September by South African Plt Off P G Dexter (5 destroyed and 2 probables), who had put the perfectly serviceable fighter down in order to attempt to save his squadron-mate, Plt Off 'Pip' Cardell. The latter had baled out of his battle-damaged Spitfire just offshore, but his parachute had failed to open and he fell to his death.

32

Mk I P9322/PR-L of Plt Off David Crook, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, July 1940

Crook was flying this aircraft on the evening of 9 July when he shot down a Ju 87B of I./StG 77 and damaged a second off Portland naval base – his first aerial victories. He was also credited with a shared damage claim against a Do 17 whilst flying the fighter on 13 July. Crook's final score was 5 and 2 shared destroyed, 2 probables and 1 and 1 shared damaged. Shot up by a Bf 110 of V./LG 1 whilst being flown by Plt Off M J Appleby on 8 August off the Isle of Wight, P9322 underwent extensive repairs before being issued to No 61 OTU. The veteran fighter was written off on 15 September 1942 when it broke up in flight near Cardiff.

33

Mk I R6690/PR-Q of Flg Off John Dundas, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940

No 609 Sqn's leading ace, John Dundas used this machine on the afternoon of 13 August to down one Ju 87R and damage a second (both from II./StG 2) over Lyme Bay, although the gunner in the latter Stuka managed to knock out R6690's glycol system – Dundas was forced to perform a deadstick landing back at Warmwell. Following a short spell out of action, the Mk I was declared serviceable again later in the month, but was shot down from a height of 20,000 ft just after midday on 15 September whilst attacking a formation of Do 17s over Kenley. Its pilot, Plt Off G N Gaunt, died in the crash.

34

Mk I R6691/PR-J of Flt Lt Frank Howell, No 609 Sqn, Middle Wallop, August 1940

This particular Mk I was heavily involved in combat with No 609 Sqn during the summer of 1940, being used by Frank Howell (7 and 3 shared destroyed, 2 unconfirmed destroyed, 2 probables, 2 and 1 shared damaged) to destroy a Stuka in the same action that involved R6690. The Howell/R6691 combination also destroyed a Bf 110 on 25 August and a Do 17 on 15 September, as well as probable kills on 7 September – some confusion exists over the claim for 25 August, as Sgt Alan Feary (5 destroyed, 1 shared unconfirmed destroyed, 1 probable and 4 damaged) has also been credited with a Bf

110C-4 (of 1./ZG 2) kill, plus one damaged, in R6691 at the same time! On 25 September, whilst being flown by Flg Off J C Newbery, the aircraft was power dived in order to evade Bf 109s, and in the subsequent recovery suffered distorted wings and a shattered hood. In the cockpit, the pilot's seat collapsed due to the G inflicted on the airframe, and Newbery suffered severe internal injuries. Following repairs, R6691 went on to serve with Nos 616 and 602 Sqn, before being passed to No 58 OTU in June 1941. It was finally written off following a mid-air collision with another OTU Spitfire Mk V in March 1943.

35

Mk IIA P8098/PR-Z ENFIELD SPITFIRE of Flt Lt John Curchin, No 609 Sqn, Biggin Hill, May 1941

Although this presentation aircraft was the personal mount of Australian Battle of Britain ace John Curchin (8 and 4 shared destroyed, 1 shared unconfirmed destroyed, 1 probable and 1 damaged), he was actually flying P8264 (see below) when he claimed his only kills (1.5 Bf 109F-2s of I./JG 3) in a Mk IIA on 8 May 1941 – P8098 had been involved in this sortie, but was being flown by a Sgt R Boyd. Severely damaged in a forced landing near Manston following combat on 21 May, P8098 underwent extensive repairs before finally being issued to No 130 Sqn in August. Its flying days were ended whilst still in frontline service with the latter unit when it struck a hut during a low altitude beat up of Peranporth airfield in October 1941.

36

Mk IIA P8264/PR-H of Flg Off John Bisdee, No 609 Sqn, Biggin Hill, May 1941

Decorated with the family *fleur de lys* beneath the cockpit, this aircraft was used by John 'The Bishop' Bisdee (8 and 2 shared destroyed, 4 probables and 3 and 1 shared damaged) to claim a half share against a Bf 109 during Circus 10, flown on 21 May. On this day No 609 Sqn, as part of the Biggin Hill Wing, filled the role of Withdrawal Cover for a formation of Blenheims that had bombed an oil refinery at Bethune. As noted above, John Curchin also met with success whilst flying P8264, although the fighter was damaged by enemy fire in this action. The machine later served with Nos 452 and 131 Sqn, then with OTUs and other second line units, including the Empire Central Flying School, until it was struck off charge in December 1944.

37

Mk I R6806/DW-N of Flt Lt John Ellis, No 610 Sqn, Biggin Hill, July 1940

No 610 Sqn's most successful pilot of 1940, John Ellis (13 and 1 shared destroyed, 1 shared unconfirmed destroyed, 1 probable and 2 damaged) achieved ace status in this aircraft on 25 July when, during two successive sorties, he claimed the destruction of three Bf 109Es of III./JG 52 off the Dover coast – the German fighters had been flying as escorts for Do 17s sent to bomb coastal convoys. A highly experienced pre-war pilot, Ellis assumed command of No 610 Sqn following the death in action of the previous incumbent, Sqn Ldr A T Smith, on the very same day the former had achieved 'ace-edom'. R6806 saw much action in the early stages of the Battle, being damaged in combat with Bf 109s on 12 August,

and then 'written off' in combat on 2 September whilst being flown by No 72 Sqn OC, Sqn Ldr A R Collins – a number of No 610 Sqn's Spitfires (still wearing DW codes) were left behind at Biggin Hill for the newly arrived No 72 Sqn to use following the former unit's posting 'up north' to No 13 Group for a rest. Collins had been shot up in X4105 earlier that day, and somehow managed to coax R6806 back to Croydon, where it was initially considered to be fit only for scrapping. However, after spending nine months on the ground being repaired, it was test flown and issued to No 132 Sqn in July 1941, before being passed to No 52 OTU the following month. It was struck off charge in March 1945.

38

Mk I P9433/DW-E of Plt Off Constantine Pegge, No 610 Sqn, Biggin Hill, August 1940

Pegge (8 destroyed, 1 probable and 3 damaged) used this aircraft on 12 August to shoot down two Bf 109Es in the Hawkinge/Dover area, his OC, John Ellis, also accounting for an *Emil* confirmed and a second as a probable during the course of this sortie. Twelve days later the Pegge/P9433 combination claimed another Bf 109E as a probable north of Gravesend. This aircraft had earlier served with No 92 Sqn, and following the Battle of Britain was overhauled, before being operated by No 131 Sqn in September 1941. Soon replaced by a Mk V, R9433 saw out its remaining years with a succession of OTUs and other second line units, before finally being struck off charge in October 1944.

39

Mk I X4253/N-FY of Sgt Wilfred Duncan-Smith, No 611 Sqn, Rochford, December 1940

Destined to go on and score 17 kills (and numerous probables and damaged claims) in various marks of Spitfire in a long and distinguished career in the frontline, Wilfred Duncan-Smith saw his first action in this Mk I on 29 December when he was credited with a half share in the probable destruction of a Do 17Z from II./KG 3 near Burnham on Crouch. A Battle of Britain veteran that had served with Nos 266 and 41 Sqn, X4253 was later used as a training tool by a series of second line units.

40

Mk IIA P7531/L-Z-I of Flt Lt Charles Green, No 421 Flt, Hawkinge, November 1940

Charles Green (11 destroyed, 3 and 1 shared probable and 1 damaged) commanded this unique flight, which was assigned the task of tracking incoming enemy formations and reporting on their composition and altitude. It inherited the 'LZ' code letters of No 66 Sqn, from which it formed, but with a square dot separating the two letters. Green was credited with 1 enemy aircraft destroyed and 2 probably destroyed whilst serving with No 421 Flt, although the identity of the Spitfire used to score these kills remains unrecorded. Prior to being issued to the Flight P7531 had been employed in diving trials at RAE Farnborough, and went on to serve with No 91 Sqn when No 421 Flt was expanded into a full squadron in January 1941. The Spitfire was subsequently shot down by I./JG 2's Unteroffizier Amhausend off Ostend whilst on a low-level shipping reconnaissance sortie on the afternoon of 24 April, its pilot, Plt Off Peall, baling out safely.

1

Plt Off David M Crook of No 609 Sqn at Middle Wallop in early September 1940. The weather in the south-west was particularly warm late into the summer of 1940, and many No 10 Group pilots favoured a combination of Battle Dress trousers and a bright pale blue (faded to almost white) shirt and black tie. Crook has also chosen to wear steel-tipped shoes as opposed to the more typical 1936 Pattern flying boots. His life jacket is a 1932 Pattern issue, with yellow-painted front panels to heighten visibility for Air Sea Rescue units searching for downed pilots in the Channel.

2

Flt Sgt George C Unwin and 'Flash', both of No 19 Sqn at Duxford in June 1940. The former is wearing full Battle Dress (note the eagle badge of the NCO airman on his right sleeve), complemented with a white scarf around his neck to reduce chafing whilst keeping a 'look out' for the enemy. Like the other figures on this plate, Unwin is wearing a Type B helmet, fitted with a Type D (Type 19) oxygen mask, and a 1932 Pattern life jacket, although he has refrained from adding yellow panels to the latter at this early stage in the conflict. Finally, his flying boots are 1936 Pattern issue.

3

One of 24 Fleet Air Arm pilots temporarily transferred to the RAF in mid-1940, Sub-Lt Arthur G 'Admiral' Blake served with No 19 Sqn from July to 29 October, when he was shot down and killed. He is wearing standard Royal Navy Officer's Dress, complemented with a white neck scarf. Note the 'A' for 'Air' within the rank curl on Blake's left sleeve, as well as the naval pilot's brevet. Like Unwin and Crook, his life jacket is a 1932 Pattern issue, coloured yellow at squadron level.

4

Sqn Ldr John A Kent (12 destroyed, 3 probables and 2 damaged), OC of No 92 Sqn at Biggin Hill in November 1940. With the winter weather closing in, many pilots now took to wearing the jackets of their 1938 Pattern Irvin flying suits whilst aloft. Kent's Type B helmet has been modified to allow him to wear the Mk IV goggles depicted here – these had only been issued in mid-1940. His gloves appear to have been privately acquired, but his boots are standard 1936 Pattern.

5

Top button of his Battle Dress undone in true fighter pilot's fashion, Plt Off Desmond G Williams of No 92 Sqn is seen in May 1940 at Northolt. Devoid of a life jacket, the pilot's harness arrangement for his seat-type parachute is clearly visible. Williams' boots are 1936 Pattern whilst his gloves are of unknown origin. He was lost on 10 October 1940 when he collided with 8-kill ace Flg Off J F Drummond (also of No 92 Sqn) whilst attacking a Do 17 – the latter was also killed.

6

Sqn Ldr Donald O Finlay, OC No 41 Sqn at Hornchurch in November 1940, wears a relatively rare pre-war lightweight one-piece overall (made of cotton twill), standard 1932 Pattern life jacket, polo neck sweater and 1936 Pattern flying boots.