



The Airfix 1:72nd

BOULTON PAUL DEFIANT

By Grant Taylor

THE Defiant was the third single-engined RAF fighter to see action in the Battle of Britain, following on the Hurricane and Spitfire. It is far less well known because it proved to be a failure in its original role of day fighter unlike its two companions. The idea behind the Defiant was rooted in World War I when the Bristol Fighter achieved considerable success against single seat fighters. Post World War I types like the Hawker Demon continued this theme and in 1934 a Demon was experimentally fitted with a Frazer-Nash turret then being designed for use on bomber aircraft. Both the RAF and the Fleet Air Arm showed some interest in this novel fighter and by the end of the decade both services would have placed orders for turret-armed fighters. Boulton Paul began work on the Defiant as a replacement for the Demon, as required by the RAF in its F.9/35 Specification. Hawker also entered the competition designing a turret-armed

fighter based on the Henley light bomber, which would be named the Hotspur.

By 1937 Boulton Paul had their aircraft flying, though without its turret, this was added in 1938 just before the first flight of the rival Hawker Hotspur. Of the two aircraft the Hotspur was by far the best, being lighter it was also faster and more agile than the Defiant. But by this time Hawker were fully committed with the production of the Hurricane and was also starting work on a new 400 mph plus fighter design which would later be known as the Typhoon and Tornado. This led to the company abandoning the Hotspur and leaving the field open for the Defiant to win the contract.

'LAME DUCK'

The early Defiant weighed 7,500 lb, this being at least 2,000 lb heavier than the Spitfire and Hurricane which all shared the same engine. Added

A No.256 Squadron Defiant T.II in all-black night fighter livery similar to the model made by the author. (MAP)

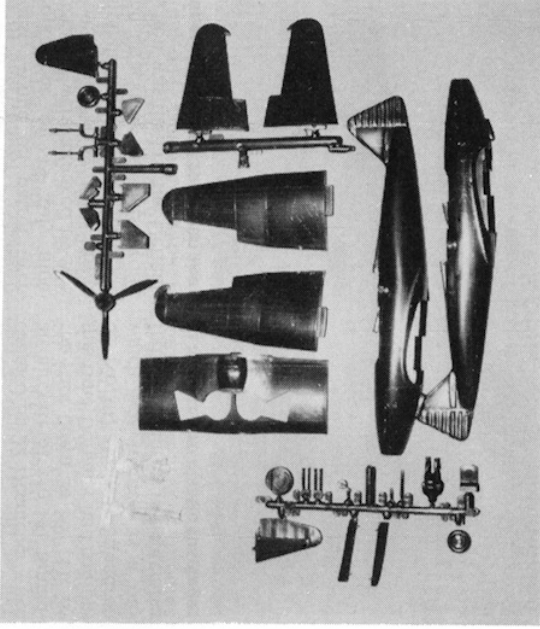
to the weight penalties was the drag of the turret which was considerable. Carrying twice as many guns as the Defiant, the Spitfire Mk.I was 60 mph faster and infinitely more agile. Flown in mock combat with a Hurricane, the Defiant was described as a 'lame duck' easily defeated by even a moderately skilled pilot. But despite all this the RAF day fighter squadrons began to equip with the type in 1939, the first to receive them being No.264 (Madras Presidency) Squadron based at Sutton Bridge and later Martlesham.

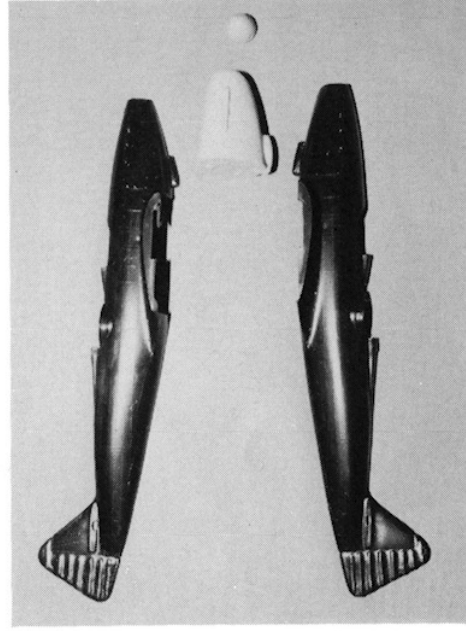
One other squadron was equipped with the type before the Battle of Britain, this being No.141 Squadron at Hawkinge. A few Defiants were issued to No.2 Squadron but these were not used in action and quickly withdrawn.

In May 1940 No.264 Squadron moved to Duxford/Horsham St Faith to patrol the Dutch coast and on their first sortie shot down a Junkers Ju 88A which was attempting to bomb a destroyer.

The next day four Ju 87B Stuka dive bombers were claimed by the squadron

Separate ailerons and open wheel wells betray the age of this kit but the most noticeable fault is the shape of the nose.





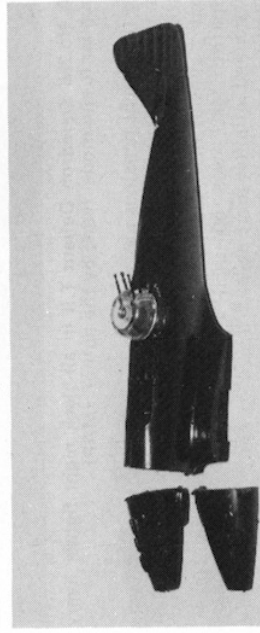
A new resin cast nose from Airwaves will correct the nose profile. This costs about £3.00 and is available from ED Models, Hannants and other mail order outlets.

before it was bounced by Me 109Es flying top cover. Of 'B' Flight's six Defiants, five were soon shot down. By the end of the month the Defiants had claimed 57 kills, which included an incredible 37 victims on 29 May whilst flying over Dunkirk. June and July were

would see as a day fighter as the type was withdrawn from the battle, No.141 moving to Prestwick two days later.

NIGHT OPERATIONS

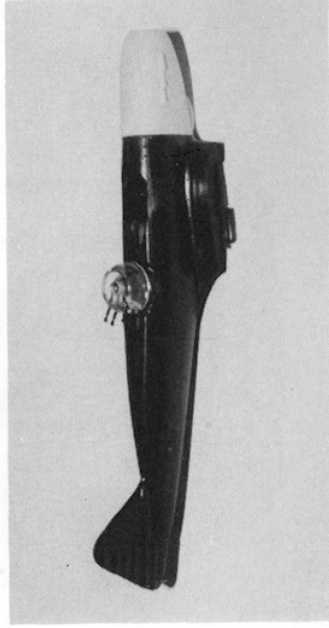
Both Nos.141 and 264 Squadrons began to train for night



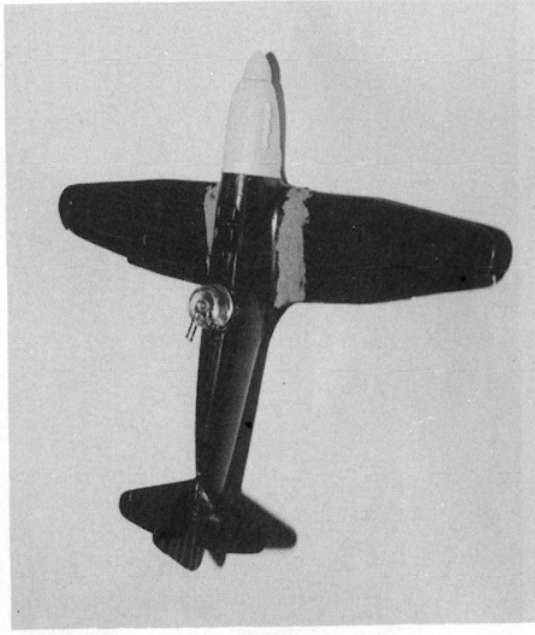
The nose is removed with a razor saw taking care not to remove too much plastic.

spent on bringing the squadron up to strength and flying patrols over the relatively quiet east coast. Its place was taken by No.141 Squadron which began operations on 3 June and moved to Hawkinge on 8 July to patrol the south east coast. While on patrol over Folkestone on 19 July nine Defiants were attacked by Me 109Es, six being shot down though they claimed four of the attackers. This disastrous action was the last the Defiant

Superglue is used to attach the resin nose to the plastic fuselage.



1940. In the early months of 1941 another four squadrons were equipped with Defiants including Nos.96, 151, 255 and 256, followed later in the year by Nos.85, 125, 153, 409, 410 and 456, all flying the Mk.I. This was basically the Mk.I day fighter with flame damper exhausts. Powered by a 1,030 hp Rolls-Royce Merlin III the Mk.I attained 304 mph at



The wing joints are filled with putty and then left for about 24 hours for the putty to dry thoroughly.

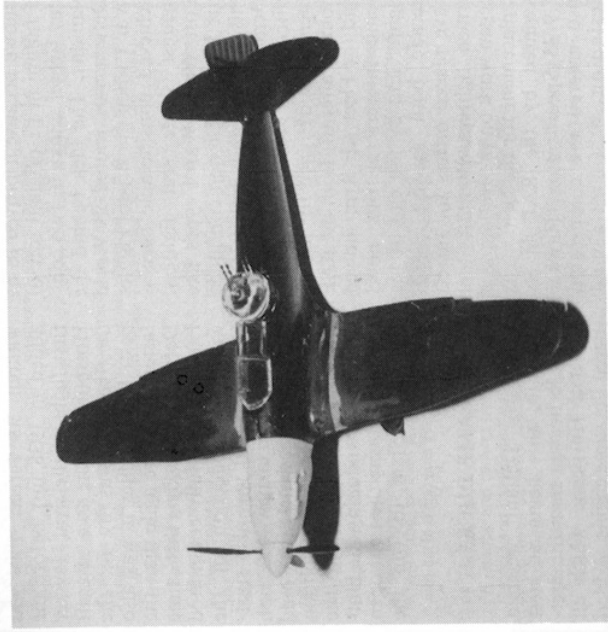
17,000 ft and could cruise at 259 mph at 15,000 ft.

Boulton Paul did attempt to produce a single seat fighter by removing the turret and installing two .303 machine guns in each wing. The projected performance was a maximum speed of 350 mph placing it between the Hurricane and Spitfire in terms of performance. But the RAF showed little interest and so the next project was to fit radar to the existing Defiant Mk.I. By

designated the Defiant NF.Mk.IA and these entered service in September 1941.

The final fighter of the Defiant series was the much improved NF.Mk.II powered by a 1,280 hp Merlin XX engine. The maximum speed was increased to 316 mph at 16,000 ft, at least 20 mph faster than the NF.Mk.IA with the original Merlin III engine. This version entered service in the summer of 1941, the first aircraft being fitted with the same

The wings have now been sanded and the undercarriage has been added.



A Defiant NF.Mk.I of No.256 Squadron in its 'night black' livery when used as a night fighter. This is a good, simple conversion and well recommended.

radar as the Mk.IA, but later changing to the AI Mk.VI set. The Defiant was never a great success as a night fighter and it was replaced by the larger Beaufighter and Mosquito which were faster and far more powerfully armed. Like its naval cousin the Blackburn Roc, the Defiant was an expensive waif of precious resources at a time when the very survival of Britain depended on air power and fighter aircraft in particular. The single-seat Defiant would have been a far more useful machine, but rather than admit to failure, the RAF refused this option and actually increased orders for the original machine.

CORRECTING THE KIT

My first Defiant kit was purchased in the 1960s when I was too young to bother about the success, or lack of it, of the actual machine. To me this was a far more interesting aircraft than the Spitfires, Hurricanes and Me 109s which up until then had been my idea of how

a World War 2 fighter should look. Looking at the kit again almost 30 years later I am still impressed by the fine rivet detail, though the real thing was one of the first examples of flush riveting. In scale and general outline this kit is quite

good, the only problem being the engine and spinner which are far too thin in cross section giving the nose a pointed appearance. This means that for an accurate model the nose forward of the wing leading edge would need to be rebuilt. Fortunately Airwaves have a 1:72nd scale resin cast nose and spinner for the Defiant Mk.I in their range at the modest price of £3.10 available via mail order from ED Models. Using a razor saw, sharp knife and a flat file the old nose can be removed and the accurate one added with the minimum of fuss making this an ideal conversion for the beginner. In recent years resin has taken the place of vacuformed plastic with many of the cottage industry companies producing this type of simple conversion. I must confess that I am not a fan of the vacuumform, I find them too delicate and time consuming and have only become interested in kit conversions since the introduction of resin.

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a sharp scalpel to trim the edge right up to the engine panel line so that the resin nose will fit square and flush with the fuselage. This was then assembled as per the instruction sheet, though I added a little basic detail inside the cockpit and I left out the crude pilot figure. Detailing the cockpit interior would greatly improve the model, especially if the model is required to have an open cockpit.

The wings were next and like the fuselage could be improved by some filling and scribing. I built up the entire wing and while it was being cemented I noticed the lack of flaps on the underside trailing edge. These were quickly added with a fine P-Cutter and a steel rule held in position with some plasticene. This done the wings are ready to be cemented to the fuselage. I found there to be quite a large gap between the upper wing and the wing root which is moulded as part of the fuselage. This gap was filled with modelling putty and the whole thing left to dry until the following evening. The putty was then sanded smooth and the final pieces added.

The finished model was painted in satin black, Humbrol No.85 and given a thin coat of gloss varnish before the decals were added. Alternative decals are available from Almark sheet CO2 Battle of Britain, which features an aircraft piloted by Pilot Officer Donald. This aircraft has the day fighter camouflage and was one lost to Me 109E fighters at Folkestone on 19 July 1940.