

# Gloster Gauntlets

## 3Sqn RAAF Sep40-Jan41

On 19<sup>th</sup> September 1940 HQ Middle East directed 3Sqn to immediately send four pilots and sufficient groundcrew by road from RAF Ismailia to No.102 Maintenance Unit at Abu Sueir near Cairo, Egypt. The airmen were to collect four Gloster Gauntlet aircraft and the next day fly to No.208Sqn RAF at Qasaba Landing Ground (LG11) approximately 376km NNW of Cairo. The party of four officers<sup>1</sup> and nine airmen<sup>2</sup> departed as ordered to collect the four Gauntlets from 102MU and prepared to leave the next day. On 20<sup>th</sup> September the Gauntlets departed 102MU and safely arrived at Qasaba, the groundcrew following aboard a RAF Bombay transport aircraft. At Qasaba the pilots underwent an intense four week course of general flying and operational dive bombing tactics using the Gauntlet aircraft while the groundcrew were given instruction on field maintenance and the day-to-day operation of the aircraft.

FLGOFF P.B Turnbull became ill and had to be evacuated from Qasaba on 05Oct40, FLTLT Gordon Steege along with PLTOFF Al Davidson were flown to Qasaba as a replacement pilot and relief pilot respectively. On 11<sup>th</sup> of October FLGOFF J.R Perrin and FLGOFF J.M Davidson were ordered to 102MU and collected two additional Gauntlets then proceeded to Qasaba on 12Oct40. The detachment at Qasaba now numbered six aircraft with six pilots and nine groundcrew<sup>3</sup>. On 12<sup>th</sup> October FLTLT Jock Perrin departed Helwan in Gauntlet K7884 and flew to El Qasaba via Amriya and Aboukir arriving Qasaba late morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>.

On 26<sup>th</sup> October the Squadron was warned it would soon move to Gerawla Landing ground in the Western Desert for operational duty, all aircraft (Gladiators and Gauntlets), stores and personnel were to prepare for the move over the period 26-31Oct. The Squadron eventually moved to Gerawla on 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov40 and four of the Gauntlets were flown from Qasaba to Gerawla<sup>4</sup> while the other two aircraft were left unserviceable at Qasaba awaiting spares. During the remainder of November the Gauntlets partook of several training exercises with various Army units to give them some understanding of what they could expect in future combat facing dive bombers and fighters. On 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 1940 K5325 was issued to No.51 RSU and did not return to the Squadron.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December HQ No.202 Group decided to position one flight of Gladiators and one flight of Gauntlets at an advanced landing ground for a period of approximately 10 days. Accordingly, early the following day five Gladiators [from Gerawla] and five Gauntlets [from Qasaba] moved to ALG75 near Sidi Barrani in Egypt, 95km east of the Libya-Egypt border. The Gauntlets flew Operational missions over the next week as shown:

- 09Dec40 Five Gauntlets departed the ALG at 1235hrs for a dive bombing attack on enemy MT on the escarpment NW of Sofafi. One aircraft aborted with mechanical issues but the remaining four completed the mission.
- 11Dec40 Five Gauntlets departed the ALG at 0620hrs to dive bomb retreating enemy troops NW of Halfway House between Sofafi and Halfaya Pass. The flight returned to base without seeing the enemy.
- 11Dec40 Four Gauntlets departed the ALG at 1105hrs to dive bomb retreating enemy troops near Sofafi. Targets were dive bombed and machine gunned successfully and aircraft returned to base at 1200hrs.
- 11Dec40 Four Gauntlets departed the ALG at 1400hrs to dive bomb and strafe the same target. Mission completed and returned to base at 1510hrs.
- 12Dec40 Five Gauntlets departed the ALG at 0815hrs to attack enemy troops near Halfaya. Target located and attacked successfully, returned to base at 0945hrs
- 13Dec40 The detached flight moved from ALG75 to a new operating base at Bir Mella airfield near Sidi Barrani in Egypt, 77km east of the Libya-Egypt border

By this time HQ 202 Group realised the Gauntlets were not suited to the task at hand nor was it easy to maintain such venerable aircraft; it was therefore decided to retire the aircraft from front line duty immediately. Accordingly, three Gauntlets<sup>5</sup> withdrew from Bir Mella on 14Dec40 and returned to Gerawla; on the next day the two remaining Gauntlets

---

<sup>1</sup> The four pilots were FLTLT Blake Pelly, FGOFF Al Rawlinson, PLTOFF Lindsay Knowles and FLGOFF Peter Turnbull.

<sup>2</sup> The site currently shows eight airmen, the 9<sup>th</sup> person was 8351 AC1 John Doderico

<sup>3</sup> The pilots were FLTLTs Steege, Pelly, FLGOFFs Knowles, Rawlinson, Perrin and J.M Davidson. Airmen were unchanged.

<sup>4</sup> Flown by Steege, Pelly, Perrin and Rawlinson

<sup>5</sup> Flown by Rawlinson, Turnbull and Davidson

flew back to Gerawla<sup>6</sup>. Later that same day HQ 202 Group ordered two Gauntlets to escort three Lysanders containing General Wavell and staff on a transit flight the following day. FLGOFF Perrin in K7843 and FLGOFF Turnbull in K7825 departed Gerawla at 0745hrs 16Dec40 arriving Maaten Bagush airfield where they picked up three Lysanders and escorted them to WD Force HQ at ALG E.75. Arrived back at Gerawla 1540hrs.

Gauntlet Serial Numbers. A total of seven Gloster Gauntlet Mk.II aircraft are known to have served briefly with 3Sqn during the Sep-Dec 1940 period and flew 23 operational missions in support of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army during its advance into Cyrenaica. Sadly, the 3 Squadron Operational Record Book (ORB) did not record most of the Gauntlet Serials thus making it almost impossible to determine the exact day(s) each aircraft flew. However pilot log books<sup>7</sup> have come to light recently and with these irrefutable documents it is at least possible to identify six of the seven aircraft used by 3 Squadron in the Western Desert during the latter months of 1940. The six Gauntlets positively identified in the log books are K5286, K5325, K7793, K7838, K7843 and K7884. The seventh aircraft positively identified in the Squadron ORB is K7825<sup>8</sup>

Two Gauntlets were used in May-Jun 1941 when the Squadron was at RAF Aqir, Palestine re-equipping with Curtiss Tomahawk fighters. The two aircraft were K5268 and K5318, there is no record of the flights undertaken in this period.

---

<sup>6</sup> Flown by Perry and Perrin

<sup>7</sup> The Log Books are those of FLGOFF Al Rawlinson and FLGOFF Jock Perrin

<sup>8</sup> A brief history of the seven Gauntlets is attached as Annex A.

**Annex A**  
**To 3 Sqn Association**  
**Gloster Gauntlet**

The squadron is known to have used nine Gloster Gauntlets in 1940-41. Seven were used when the squadron was in the Western Desert (Sep-Dec 1940) and two when the Squadron was in Palestine (May-Jun 1941).

Brief histories of 3 Squadron's known Gloster Gauntlets are detailed below:

**K5268**

- 00Apr36 The 5<sup>th</sup> of 104 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K5264 thru K5367. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.
- 28May36 Issued to 111 Squadron
- 1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.
- 14Feb38 Issued to 46 Squadron
- 15Mar39 Issued to 26 Maintenance Unit
- 00Apr39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit, Shipped to the Middle East
- 08May39 Issued to Air Depot Aboukir, Egypt
- 00Dec40 Issued to 102 Maintenance Unit Aboukir, Egypt
- 00May41 Issued to 3 Sqn RAAF at RAF Aqir, Palestine.
- 00Aug41 Issued to the Greek Training Fight at RAF Gaza in Palestine
- 10Nov41 Crashed near Gaza, damaged beyond repair and struck off charge

**K5286**

- 00Apr36 The 23<sup>rd</sup> of 104 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K5264 thru K5367. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.
- 13May36 Issued to 111 Squadron
- 1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.
- 06Jan38 Issued to 46 Squadron
- 27Feb39 Issued to 24 Maintenance Unit
- 12Apr39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit. Shipped to the Middle East
- 04May39 Issued to Air Depot Aboukir, Egypt
- 24Feb40 Issued to 33 Squadron
- 19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF. While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least six flights.
- 05Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew a 35min test flight
- 00Dec40 Issued to 102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir
- 15Jan42 Issued to the Greek Training Fight at RAF Gaza in Palestine
- 01Sep43 struck off charge

### **K5318**

00Jun36 The 55<sup>th</sup> of 104 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K5264 thru K5367. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.

08Jul36 Issued to No.9 Flying Training School

10Nov36 Issued to 46 Squadron

1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.

27Feb39 Issued to 24 Maintenance Unit

08May39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit. Shipped to the Middle East

06Jul39 Issued to Air Depot Aboukir

00Jan40 Issued to 112 Squadron

00Jul40 Issued to Pilot Reserve and Reinforcement Pool

29Aug40 Force landed on approach to Ismailia, repaired on Site

10Sep40 Issued to Training Unit and Reserve Pool, Cairo

00Jan41 Issued to 112 Squadron

30May41 Issued to 3 Sqn RAAF at RAF Aqir, Palestine.

00Jan41 Issued to the Greek Training Flight at RAF Gaza in Palestine

13Jan42 Undershot landing and hit tents, Gaza. Damaged beyond repair and Struck off Charge

### **K5325**

00Jun36 The 62<sup>nd</sup> of 104 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K5264 thru K5367. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.

17Jul35 Issued to 32Sqn

1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.

16Jan39 Issued to 691Sqn

24Mar39 Issued to 24 Maintenance Unit

02May39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit, shipped to Middle East.

06Jul39 Issued to Air Depot, RAF Aboukir, Egypt

1940 Issued to 33 Squadron

19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF. While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least seven flights.

05Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew a 30min test flight

06Dec40 Issued to No51 RSU

00Jan41 Issued to the Greek Training Flight at RAF Gaza in Palestine

14Jan42 struck off charge

### K7793

- 00Jul36 The 2<sup>nd</sup> of 100 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K7792 thru K7891. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.
- 10Nov36 Issued to 46 Squadron
- 1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.
- 18Feb39 Issued to 26 Maintenance Unit
- 06Jun39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit
- 10May39 Shipped to the Middle East for Air Depot Aboukir
- 07Jun39 Placed in reserve at Aboukir
- 17Dec40 Issued to 33 Squadron
- 19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF. From 19Sep to 28Sep FLGOFF Al Rawlinson made 17 non-operational flights
- 26Sep40 Aircraft nose art applied – “Sweet F.A.”
- 02Oct40 from 02Oct until 29Oct 1940 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson made 15 non-operational flights
- 00Nov40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson made five non-operational flights
- 00Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew nine operational missions
- 15Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew the aircraft from ALG11 to Gerawla
- 16Dec40 aircraft returned to No.102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir
- 15Oct41 struck off charge. While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least 40 flights.



*FLGOFF Al Rawlinson in K7793 'Sweet F.A.' at ALG74, December 1940*

### **K7825**

00Aug36 The 34<sup>th</sup> of 100 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K7792 thru K7891. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.

30Sep36 Issued to 66 Squadron

05Nov36 Tipped up in forced landing

1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.

13Jan38 Issued to 615 Squadron

17Jul39 Issued to No.5 Maintenance Unit

18Sep39 Issued to No.36 Maintenance Unit.

00Nov39 Shipped to the Middle East

00Jun40 Issued to Southern Rhodesian Air Force as 152

19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF, While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least 11 flights.

00Dec40 returned to 102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir

00Oct41 struck off charge

### **K7838**

00Aug36 The 47<sup>th</sup> of 100 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K7792 thru K7891. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.

27Oct36 Issued to 65 Squadron

23Mar37 Issued to 213 Sqn

1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.

17Feb39 Issued to 26 Maintenance Unit

29Apr39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit

12May39 Shipped to the Middle East for Air Depot Aboukir

07Jun39 Placed in reserve at Aboukir

17Dec40 Issued to 33 Squadron

19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF. While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least three flights.

26Nov40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew a practice dive bombing flight against tanks.

05Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew a 30min test flight

00Dec40 returned to 102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir

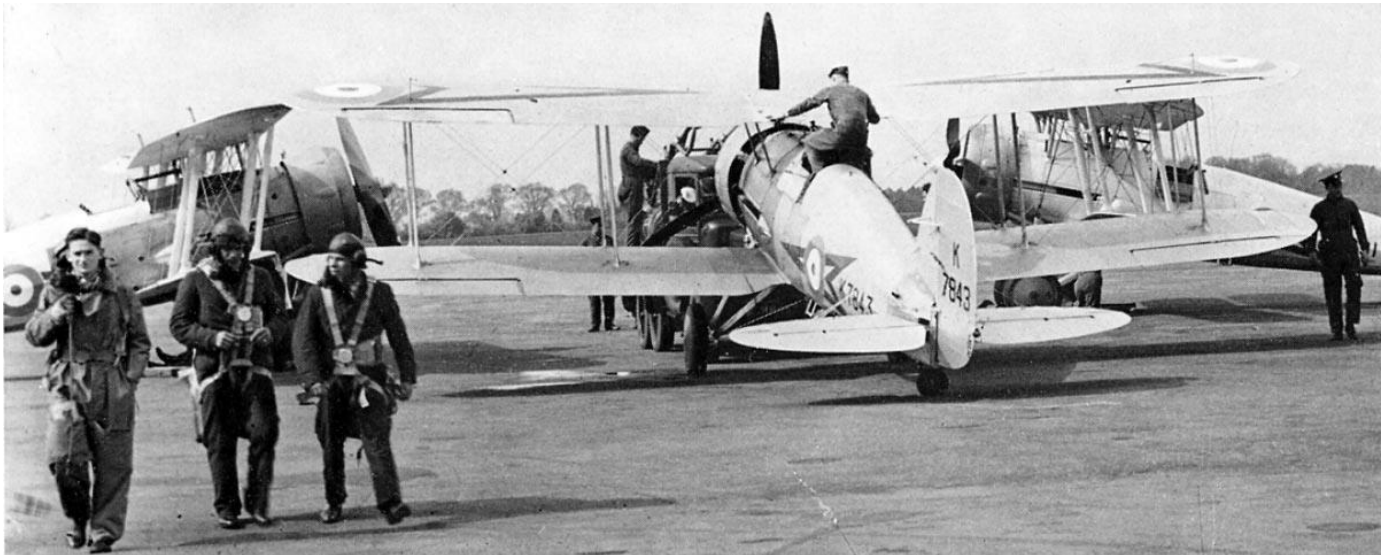
00Feb42 Issued to the Greek Training Flight at RAF Gaza in Palestine

16Jul42 Hit Hurricane BP322 while taking off from Gaza, damaged beyond repair.

00Jul42 Struck off charge and sold for scrap.

**K7843**

- 00Sep36 The 52<sup>nd</sup> of 100 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K7792 thru K7891. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.
- 04Nov36 Issued to 46 Squadron
- 1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.
- 18Feb39 Issued to 26 Maintenance Unit
- 06Jun39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit
- 22Apr39 Shipped to the Middle East for Air Depot Aboukir
- 1939 Issued to 112 Squadron
- 19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF, While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least 13 flights.
- 00Dec40 FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew combat sorties on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec (1), 11<sup>th</sup> Dec (3) and 12<sup>th</sup> Dec (1)
- 13-16Dec FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew six non-operational flights
- 10Jan41 FLGOFF Jock Perrin ferried the aircraft from Gerawla to 102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir via Amriya.
- 01Jan44 struck off charge



*K7843 with 46 Squadron at RAF Station Kenley 1938*

**K7884**

00Jan37 the 93<sup>rd</sup> of 100 Gauntlet aircraft manufactured in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mk.II production batch by the Gloster Aircraft Co Ltd in their facility at Brockworth, Gloucester, built in the Serial Range K7792 thru K7891. Powered by a single 640hp (485kW) Bristol Mercury VIS2 nine cylinder, air cooled radial engine driving a 2-blade wooden Watts propeller. Armed with two Vickers Mk.V synchronised machine guns/600 rounds per gun.

02Feb37 Issued to No.1 Aircraft Storage Depot

18Mar37 Issued to 79Sqn

1937 Two bladed wooden Watts propeller replaced by a 3-bladed Fairey metal propeller.

24Feb38 Engine lost power on take-off at Biggin Hill, aircraft hit fence and overturned. Damage assessed as Cat.B

00Feb38 Issued to 24 Maintenance Unit

02Dec38 Issued to 610 Sqn

24Mar39 Issued to 24 Maintenance Unit

06May39 Issued to 36 Maintenance Unit

28May39 Shipped to the Middle East for Air Depot Aboukir

17Sep40 Issued to 33 Squadron

19Sep40 3 Squadron RAAF, While in service with 3Sqn the aircraft is known to have flown at least six flights.

12Oct40 FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew from Helwan to Amriya, the next day to Aboukir, on the 13<sup>th</sup> to Qasaba LG.

14Oct40 FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew a 2hr Low Level bombing practice flight

17Oct40 FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew two x 1hr dive bombing practice flights

25Oct40 FLGOFF Jock Perrin flew a 2hr 10min parallel track search mission.

05Dec40 FLGOFF Al Rawlinson flew a 25min test flight

00Dec40 Issued to 102 Maintenance Unit, Aboukir

01Dec42 Aircraft struck off charge.