

Antipodean Hawks 

DESERT SAHARA ATTACK!



Curtiss Kittyhawk I/IA in the Western Desert Guidebook

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Recommended kit: 1/48 scale Hasegawa®, Curtiss P-40E Warhawk



Decal Subjects

Decal depicts Curtiss Kittyhawk I and IA in service with the RAF and RAAF in the Western Desert of North Africa during 1942.

A. GA-X AK658 Kittyhawk I with No. 112 Squadron RAF flown by O.C. Sqn/Ldr Clive 'Killer' Caldwell (RAAF) in early 1942. The aircraft displays the squadrons garish 'shark mouth' emblem and Caldwell's oxymoron personal motif 'Grim Jester', just above the identification letter 'X'. On the 21st February, Caldwell shot down a Bf 109F flown by 2./JG 27 'Experte' Oblt. Hans-Arnold Stahlschmidt using a very unorthodox tactic. Facing an enemy formation with the tactical advantage of height, he turned the tables on them by nosing into a dive to gain speed before pulling up into a near vertical climb and firing at long range into the belly of the enemy aircraft. His victim crash landed in the desert but returned to base that evening. Six days later Bf 109's from JG 27 strafed the airfield at Gambut, destroying GA-X on the ground.

B. GA-X AK766 Kittyhawk I with No. 112 Squadron RAF flown by O.C. Sqn/Ldr Clive 'Killer' Caldwell from March-May 1942. Flying AK766 on the 23rd April, Caldwell scored the last of his 20.5 confirmed 'kills' in the Western Desert by shooting down a Bf 109 over Bir Hacheim. He received the grim epithet 'Killer' in recognition of his tendency to use up any remaining ammunition strafing enemy ground targets on the way home after a sortie.

C. GA-V AK585 Kittyhawk I with No. 112 'Shark' Squadron RAF, flown by British 'Ace', P/O Neville Duke in the Western Desert, early 1942. Flying this aircraft S/W of Acroma shortly after midday on the 14th February he shot down a Macchi 200 Saetta and shared in the destruction of another with Sgt Reid from No. 3 squadron. Duke would ultimately become the highest scoring RAF fighter pilot in the Mediterranean Theatre with over 27 'kills' to his credit and be awarded the DFC three times (two bars) and the DSO.

D. GA-Y AK772 Kittyhawk I with No. 112 'Shark' Squadron RAF. Flying AK772 on the 14th March, Caldwell shot down two Italian, Macchi 202 fighters near Martuba. On the 30th May, fellow Australian and 'Ace' P/O H Burney was shot down and killed in this aircraft by a Bf 109F.

E. CV-V ET953 Kittyhawk IA flown by 'Ace', Sqn/Ldr R 'Bobby' Gibbes, O.C. No. 3 Squadron RAAF in mid 1942. On the 1st September, No. 239 Wing comprising No. 3, 450 and 112 Squadrons attacked an enemy formation of 30+ Ju 87's with an equal number of Bf 109 escorting fighters. Flying ET953, Gibbes attacked a Bf 109E sending it into a dive trailing a plume of smoke and glycol. He claimed it as a 'probable' but it was later confirmed as destroyed. Gibbes had a long and successful association with No. 3 squadron, notching up over 10 'kills'.

F. CV-N AK806 Kittyhawk I flown by 'Ace', Sqn/Ldr A 'Nicky' Barr O.C. No. 3 Squadron RAAF at Sidi Heneish in June 1942. On the 24th of June, Sgt. Fox was flying this aircraft when he was attacked by an Italian G-50 and force landed in the desert. Two days later Barr suffered a similar fate when he was attacked by two Bf 109's. Badly injured in the attack, he took to his parachute and landed into enemy captivity. At the time of his capture he was the squadrons leading 'Ace' with 12 'kills' to his credit.

G. CV-O AK961 Kittyhawk I with No. 3 Squadron RAAF, flown by various pilots in mid 1942. The nose emblem depicts 'Snifter', a popular Sydney Morning Herald comic strip character, casually walking away after urinating on the 'Afrika Korps' symbol. At midday on the 24th June, Sgt Boardman was flying AK961 in company with three other Kittyhawks from the squadron when they were attacked by six Bf 109's. He shot down one of the attackers which was seen to dive into the ground and explode on impact.

H. OK-V ET918 Kittyhawk IA with No. 450 Squadron RAAF, flown by Sqn Ldr A Ferguson in July-August 1942. Flying ET918 on the 19th July 1942 Ferguson achieved a 'double kill' with the destruction of a Ju 52 and Ju 87 Stuka. His logbook entry for these victories was embellished by a hand drawn Swastika and the words 'Heil Hitler!'. ET918 did not serve the squadron for long, on the 29th August Sgt Markle was flying this aircraft when he was shot down by a Bf 109.

I. LD-H-AK846 Kittyhawk I with No. 250 Squadron RAF flown by 'Ace' Flt/Lt J Waddy (RAAF) during May 1942. On the 12th of May Waddy had his most successful sortie of the war when eight Kittyhawks from No. 250 Squadron and five Beaufighters from 252 Squadron 'ambushed' a formation of thirteen troop laden Ju 52's transports with an escort of probably two Bf 110. In the ensuing slaughter, Waddy was responsible for two of the nine Ju 52's shot down and claimed both of the Bf 110 escorts.

Decal Application

The clear carrier film on this decal covers the entire sheet. Cut around each design with scissors, dip in lukewarm water and set aside until it can be slid freely from the backing paper. Wet surface and slide decal directly onto the model; gently remove excess moisture. As the clear carrier film is very thin, care should be taken to prevent the very edge of the decal from folding under itself. If this happens, use a small, pointed, artists paint brush to gently remove the fold and smooth the decal down onto the model surface. To ensure good adhesion, the decal must be applied onto a smooth, clean, gloss finish surface. Apply decal setting solution if required. The fuselage roundels are in two parts. Apply yellow ring decal **first** and allow to dry thoroughly before applying second part.

After application use a sharp blade to trim the 'A1' fuselage roundels and bottom of Finflash where they overlap the wing fillet and fin panel line respectively. Trim 'shark mouth' decal and apply decal setting solution to help it conform around lip of air intake.

Camouflage & Detail

Camouflage & Weathering

The Curtiss P-40E Kittyhawk began replacing the Tomahawk in RAF Western Desert squadrons from December 1941. Like its predecessor, they were received by the RAF wearing a factory applied green/brown/grey Dupont paint, camouflage scheme complete with RAF markings. The factory applied camouflage pattern was uniformly applied using large rubber masks resulting in a 'hard' edge between the colours.

Before delivery to the squadrons, the green portions were over painted with a light brown/yellow RAF colour known as 'Middle Stone'. National markings and fuselage serial number were masked over during repainting leaving the port side serial on a 'green' background. The Middle Stone was sprayed 'freehand' without the use of any camouflage masking mats leaving a relatively wide over-spray demarcation between upper camouflage colours. In addition to the new colour scheme, a red spinner was adopted as a theatre marking.

There is some variation and uncertainty when it comes to describing the underside RAF colours. It appears that the underside of aircraft were repainted in either RAF Azure Blue, an official RAF colour intended to be used in conjunction with Dark Earth and Middle Stone or an unofficial RAF 'dark blue' developed by the receiving maintenance unit referred to here as 'Mediterranean Blue'. Although official RAF colours of Light and Dark Mediterranean Blue were available, the underside colour as applied to RAF Kittyhawks tended toward a colour range between these official colours. In some cases where a colour close to Dark Mediterranean Blue was used a thin yellow outer ring was applied to the under wing roundel to differentiate it from the underside colour.

Two of the aircraft depicted on the decal sheet, CV-V and GA-Y, had a dark blue underside, slightly lighter than the RAF official colour of Dark Mediterranean Blue. For a short period of time CV-V is believed to have retained its original factory applied 'Sky Grey' underside colour.

As a general rule, paint surfaces on 'Desert' P-40's very quickly showed signs of significant weathering and faded paint work. Kept in the open air, unprotected from the burning sun and the abrasive sand laden wind, upper paint surfaces tended to quickly fade.

In preparing the '3-view' individual aircraft camouflage diagrams, some degree of speculation was required. Where the camouflage pattern information was incomplete, reference was made to other Kittyhawks with a close serial number and/or in the same Squadron during the relevant time period.

Colour Reference

| | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Curtiss 'Brown'/RAF Dark Earth FS30118 (Tamiya XF52+XF64) | RAF Middle Stone FS30266 (Tamiya XF59+XF60) | RAF Azure Blue FS35414 | RAF Light Mediterranean Blue FS35177 | RAF Dark Mediterranean Blue FS35050 |
|---|---|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The FS references and Tamiya® Paint mixes are only a rough approximation for the colours as they appeared on the full size aircraft and make no allowance for 'scale effect' or weathering.

Kit Conversion

The P-40 'E' model 'Warhawk' was referred to in the RAF as a Kittyhawk I and later 'IA' for 'lend-lease' P-40E-1's (ET 100-999, EV100-699) built to British specifications. As the kit depicts a P-40E-1 Kittyhawk IA, some minor modifications as detailed below are required to build the kit as an 'I'.

The Kittyhawk I lacked hemispherical fairings around the m/g blast tubes as depicted on the kit (M1 & M2). Cut off blast tubes and replace with metal tubing.

As a general rule the Kittyhawk I had a 'dog leg' type pitot tube while the later IA had an 'arrow' type. Both types are provided in the kit.

Under fuselage drop tank/bomb, shackles and sway braces as depicted on the kit were not originally installed on the Kittyhawk I but were standard equipment on the 'IA'. See 'Kitti-bomber' below.

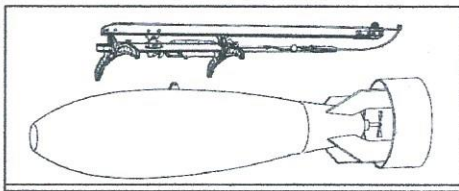
Both Kittyhawk I and IA were fitted with a standard RAF Sutton pilot harness.

Kitti-Bomber

On the 10th of March 1942 Caldwell made the first ever bomb drop tests in a Kittyhawk I, GA-A AK900, marking the beginning of a new role for the aircraft as a 'fighter-bomber'. British bomb release gear was attached to the



underside of the aircraft as depicted in the diagrams permitting one 250 lb bomb to be carried. Later, two 250 lb or



a single 500 lb bomb could be carried under the fuselage of a Kittyhawk IA. Bombing involved diving at an angle of 45 degrees, aiming directly at the target. At a height of 2-3,000 feet the pilot would start to pull out of the dive, wait about 5 seconds and release the bomb. After releasing the bomb, the pilot dived to ground level and headed for home thereby minimising the chances of being hit by ground fire. With practice, pilots were able to achieve a relatively high degree of accuracy in their bombing.

Gunsight

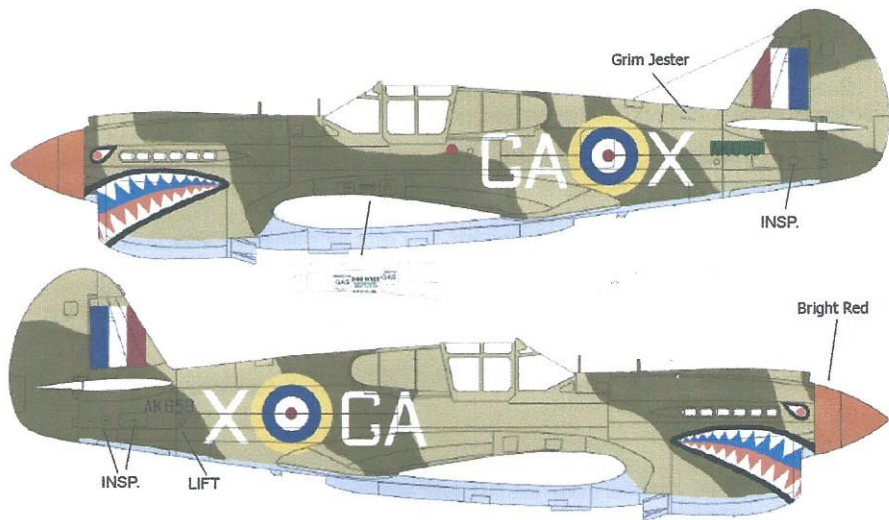
The standard equipment N2 reflector gunsight in the Kittyhawk was not well received by pilots. Its poor design, construction and lack of reliability significantly reduced the aircraft's effectiveness as a fighter. Pilots would frequently be forced to rely on the simple ring and bead sight due to the reflector gunsight failing in combat. A number of Kittyhawks were retrofitted with the battle proven British GM2 reflector gunsight that had previously been used in the Tomahawk.

The GM2 gunsight was held in a 'C' section metal arm with a slight upward bend half way along its length, attached to the cockpit combing. The metal arm with gunsight attached was approximately 8mm in length and 2mm wide in 1/48th scale. A gunsight can be made from scrap, clear plastic or simply use the gunsight from an ICM/Hasegawa Spitfire VIII/IX kit and the arm can be made from scrap, plastic sheet or photo-etch.

The gun camera pod (A2, 24,25) located under the starboard wing was rarely seen on both the Kittyhawk I and IA.

Pilot Gear

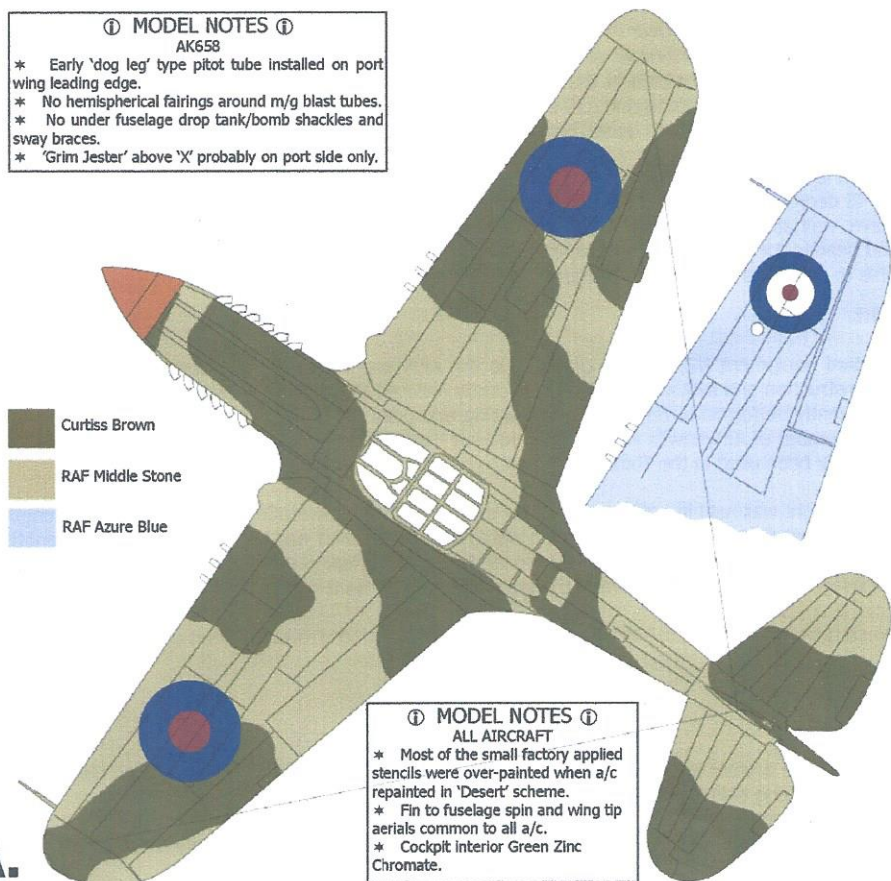
Pilots usually wore a khaki shirt and long trousers with black, wool lined, flying boots. Flying gear included a dark red/brown flying helmet with black ear pieces and various types of goggles. Attached to the helmet was a brownish olive green rubber oxygen mask with 'buff' straps and a black extendable hose. The pilot sat on a seat type parachute that was basically khaki green in colour with 'buff' straps. On operations pilots carried a revolver in a holster attached to a webbing ammunition belt worn around the waist.



① MODEL NOTES ①

AK658

- * Early 'dog leg' type pitot tube installed on port wing leading edge.
- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * No under fuselage drop tank/bomb shackles and sway braces.
- * 'Grim Jester' above 'X' probably on port side only.



① MODEL NOTES ①

ALL AIRCRAFT

- * Most of the small factory applied stencils were over-painted when a/c repainted in 'Desert' scheme.
- * Fin to fuselage spin and wing tip aerials common to all a/c.
- * Cockpit interior Green Zinc Chromate.

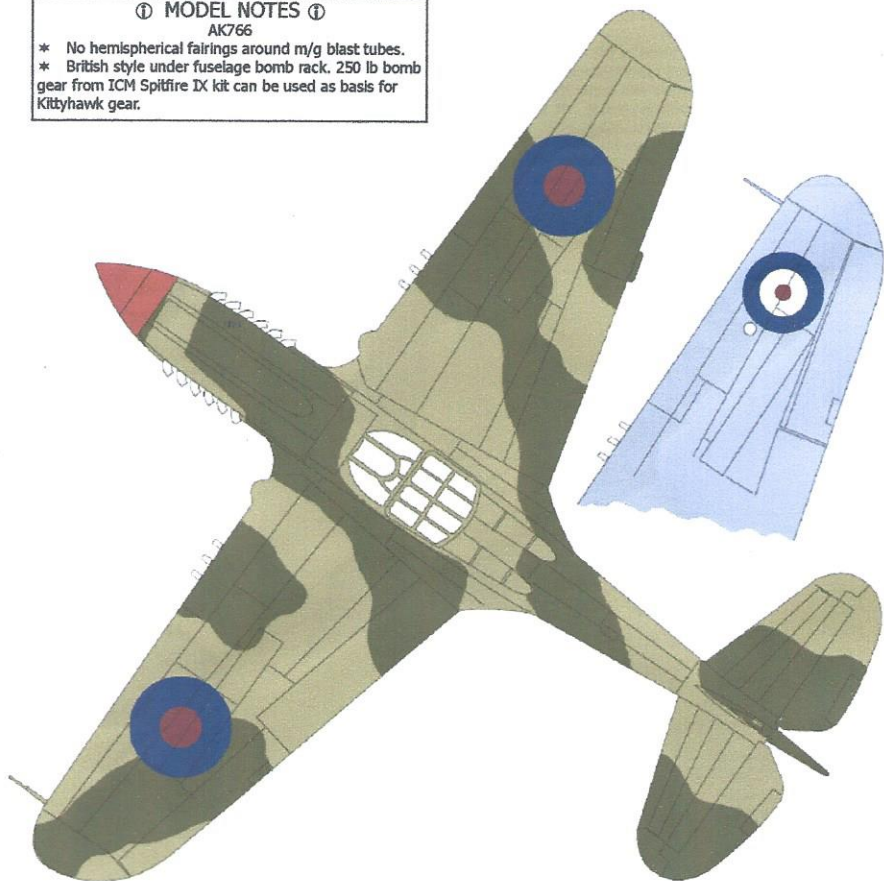
A.



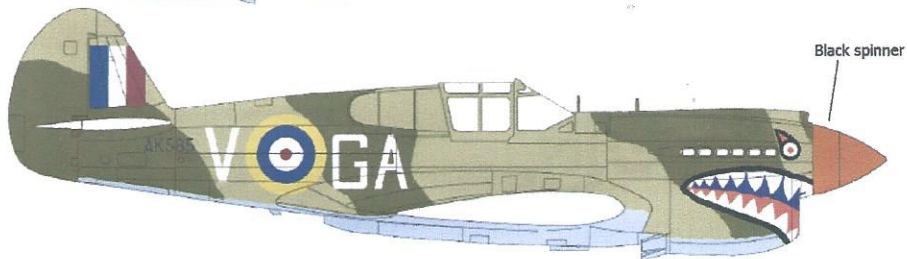
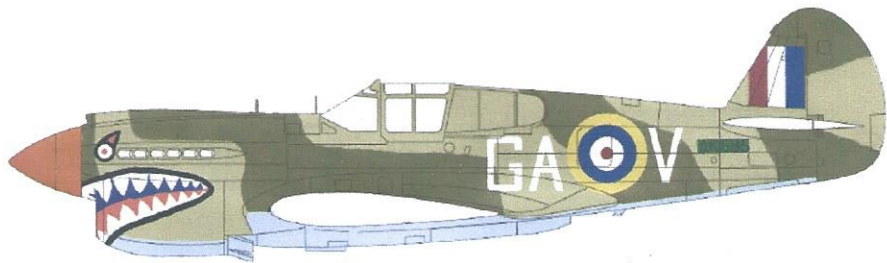
① MODEL NOTES ①

AK766

- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * British style under fuselage bomb rack, 250 lb bomb gear from ICM Spitfire IX kit can be used as basis for Kittyhawk gear.



B.

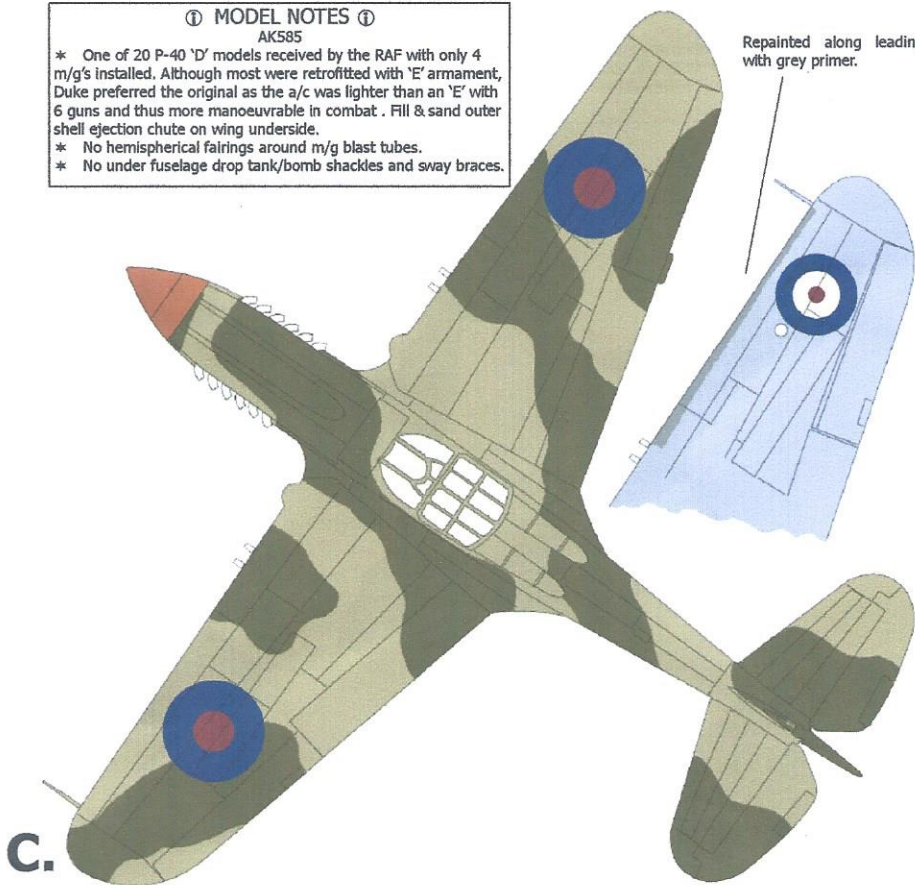


① MODEL NOTES ①

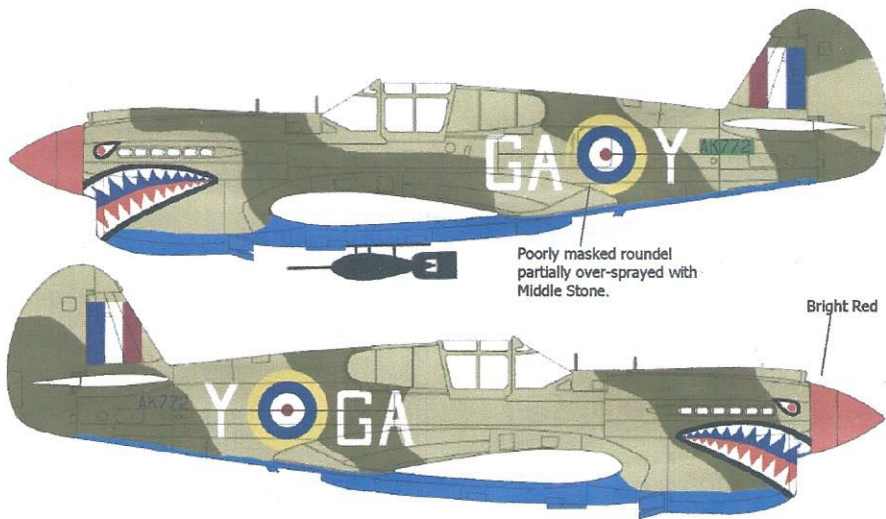
AK585

- * One of 20 P-40 'D' models received by the RAF with only 4 m/g's installed. Although most were retrofitted with 'E' armament, Duke preferred the original as the a/c was lighter than an 'E' with 6 guns and thus more manoeuvrable in combat. Fill & sand outer shell ejection chute on wing underside.
- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * No under fuselage drop tank/bomb shackles and sway braces.

Repainted along leading edge with grey primer.



C.

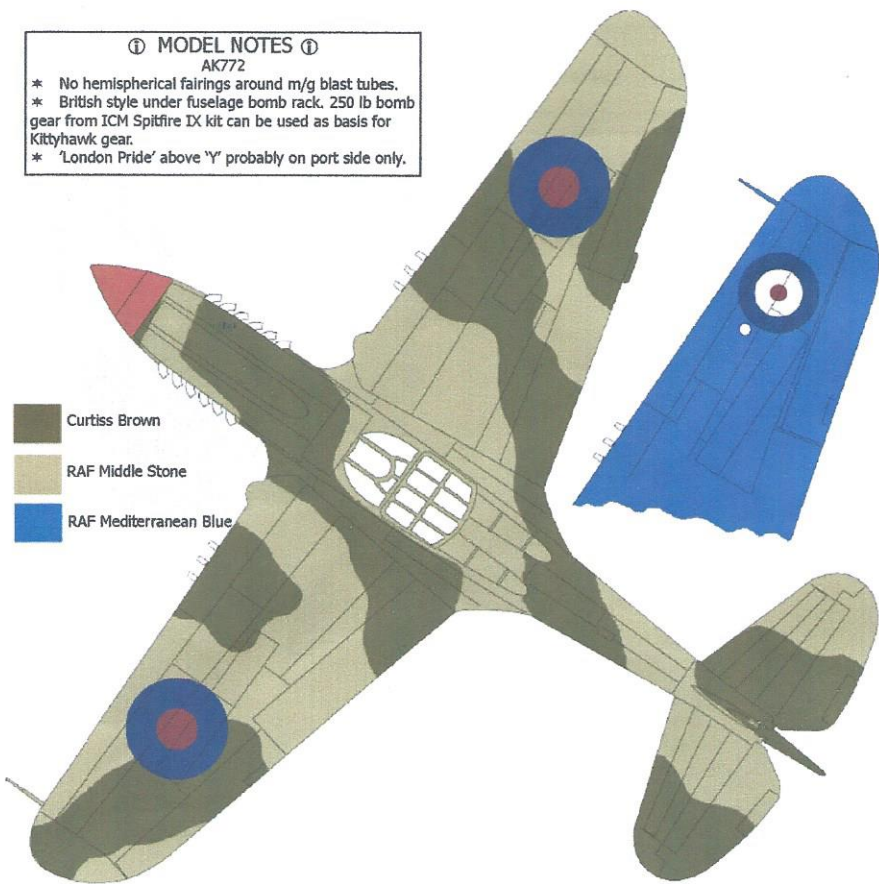


① MODEL NOTES ①

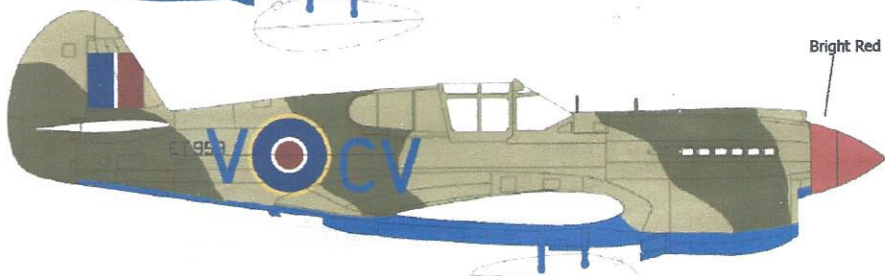
AK772

- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * British style under fuselage bomb rack. 250 lb bomb gear from ICM Spitfire IX kit can be used as basis for Kittyhawk gear.
- * 'London Pride' above 'Y' probably on port side only.

-  Curtiss Brown
-  RAF Middle Stone
-  RAF Mediterranean Blue

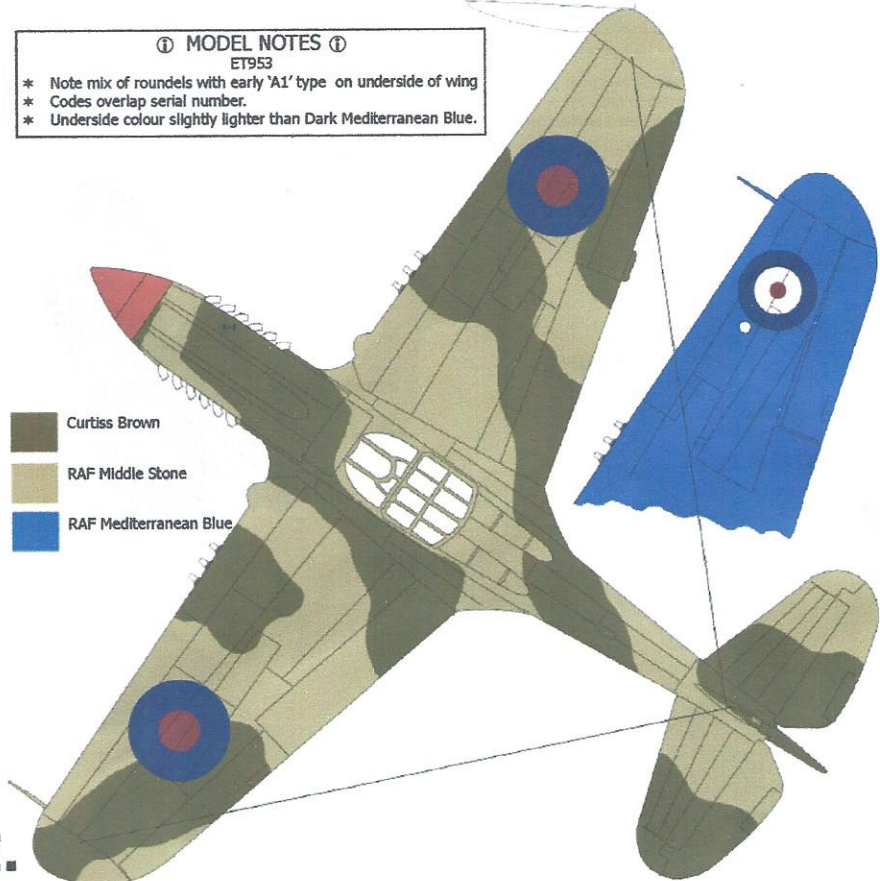


D.

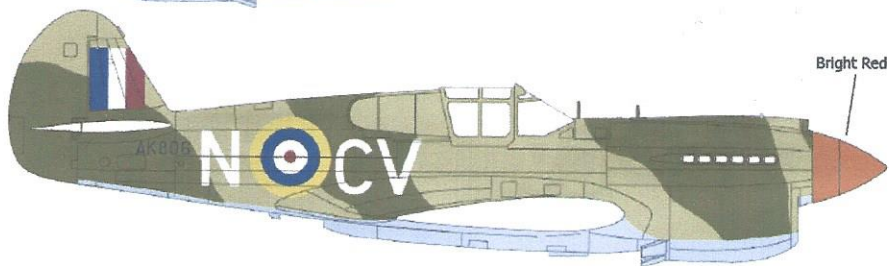
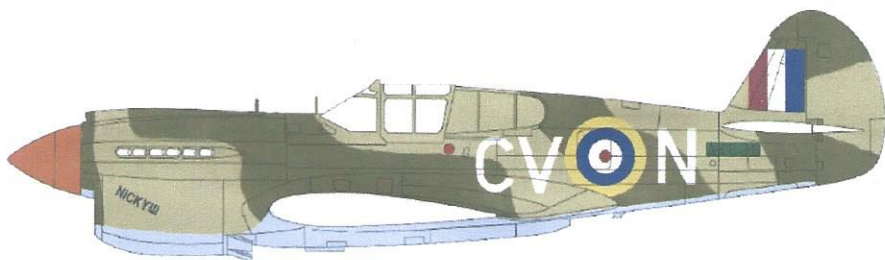


① MODEL NOTES ①
 ET953
 * Note mix of roundels with early 'A1' type on underside of wing
 * Codes overlap serial number.
 * Underside colour slightly lighter than Dark Mediterranean Blue.

-  Curtiss Brown
-  RAF Middle Stone
-  RAF Mediterranean Blue



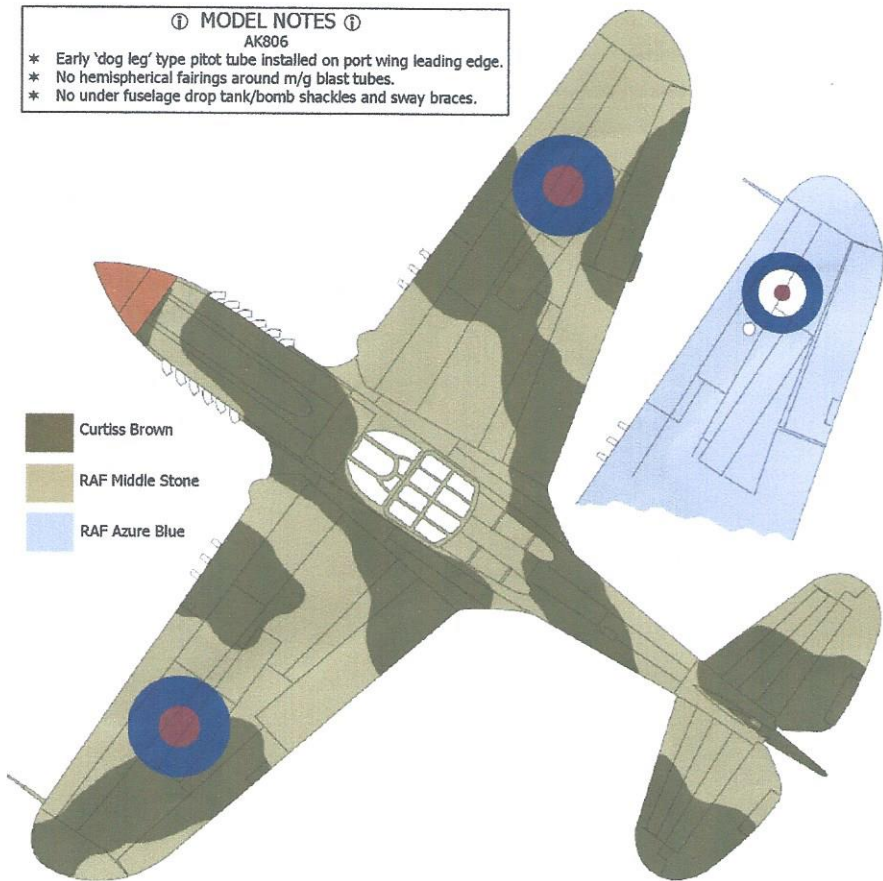
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① MODEL NOTES ①

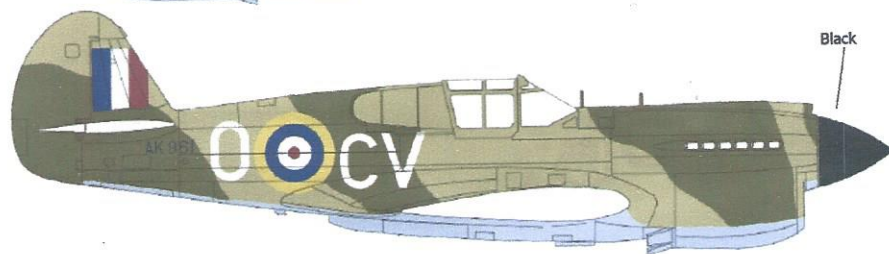
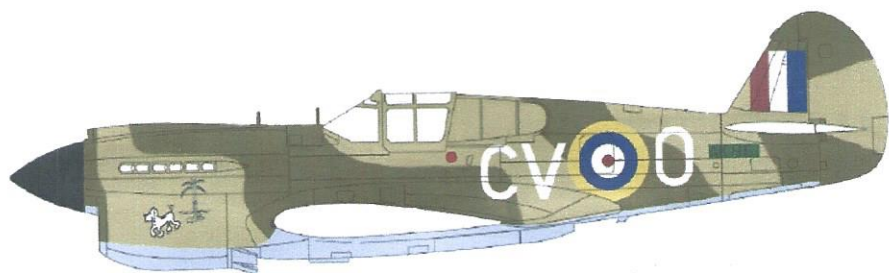
AK806

- * Early 'dog leg' type pitot tube installed on port wing leading edge.
- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * No under fuselage drop tank/bomb shackles and sway braces.



- Curtiss Brown
- RAF Middle Stone
- RAF Azure Blue

F.

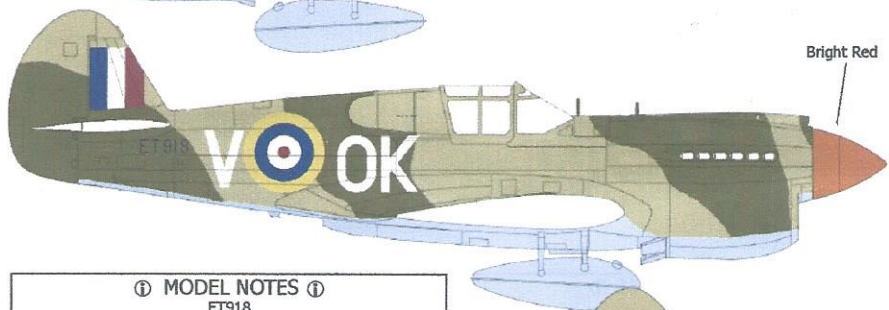
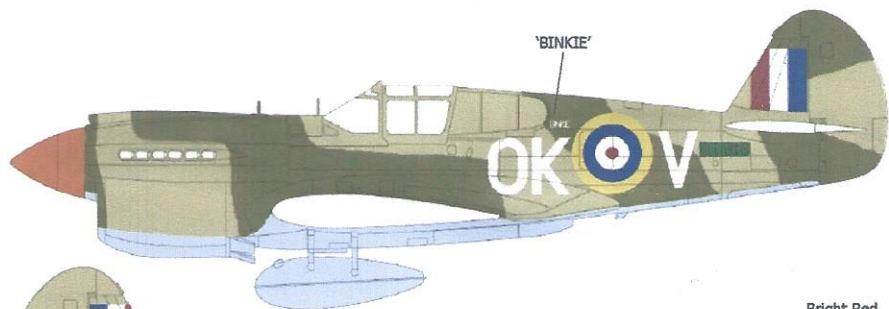


① MODEL NOTES ①

AK961

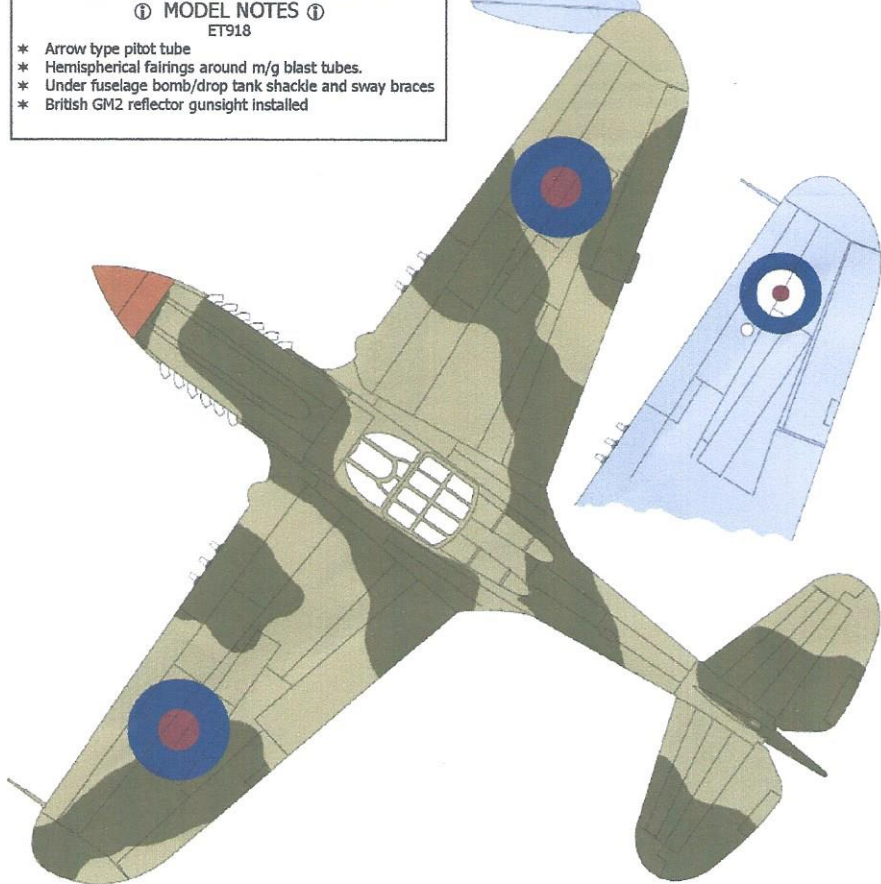
- * Early 'dog leg' type pitot tube installed on port wing leading edge.
- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.



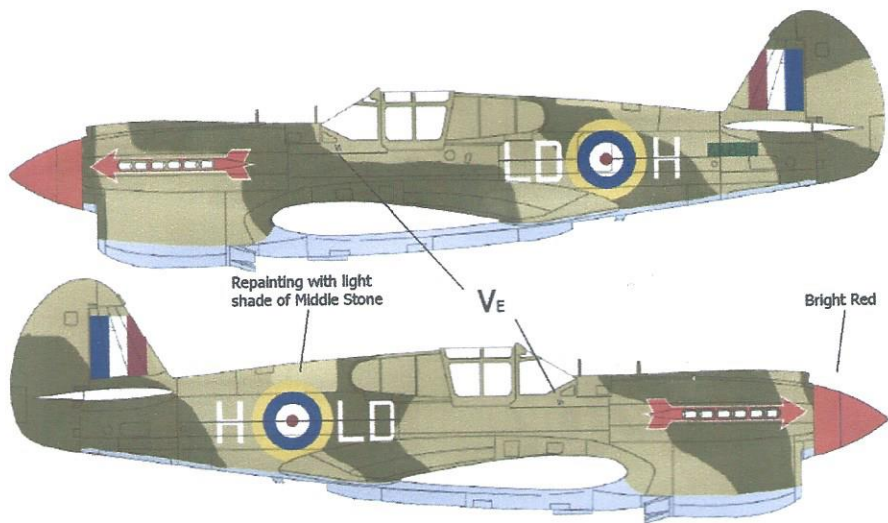


① MODEL NOTES ①
ET918

- * Arrow type pitot tube
- * Hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * Under fuselage bomb/drop tank shackle and sway braces
- * British GM2 reflector gunsight installed



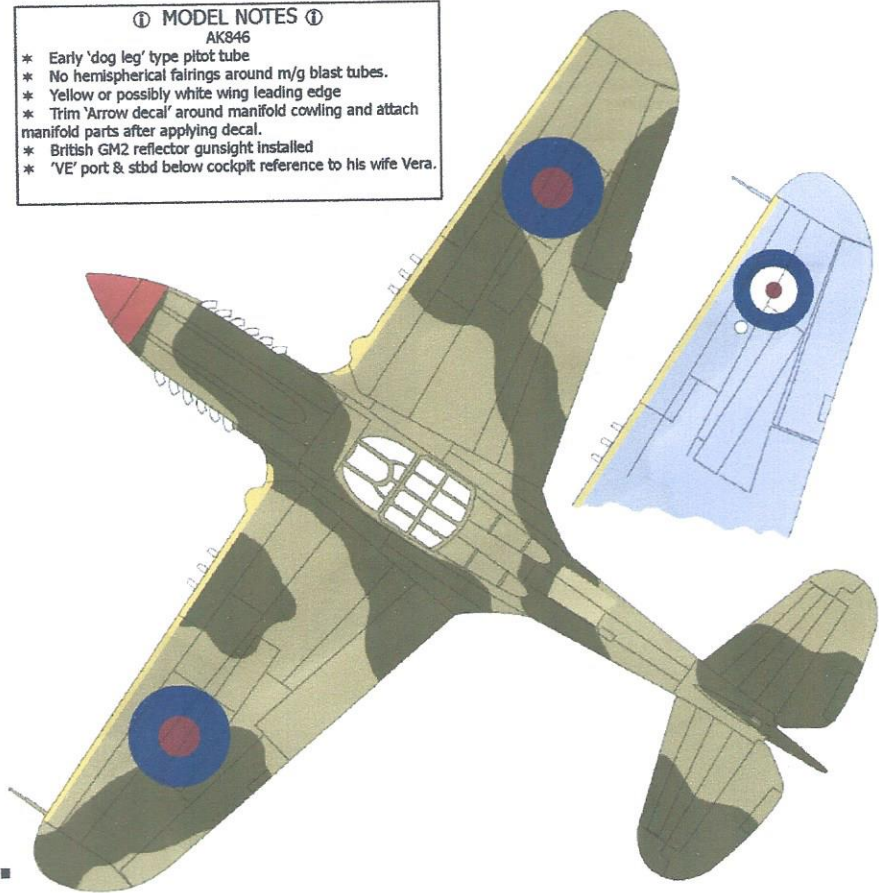
H.



① MODEL NOTES ①

AK846

- * Early 'dog leg' type pitot tube
- * No hemispherical fairings around m/g blast tubes.
- * Yellow or possibly white wing leading edge
- * Trim 'Arrow decal' around manifold cowlings and attach manifold parts after applying decal.
- * British GM2 reflector gunsight installed
- * 'VE' port & stbd below cockpit reference to his wife Vera.



I.

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