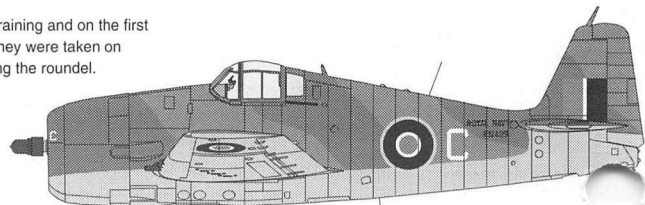
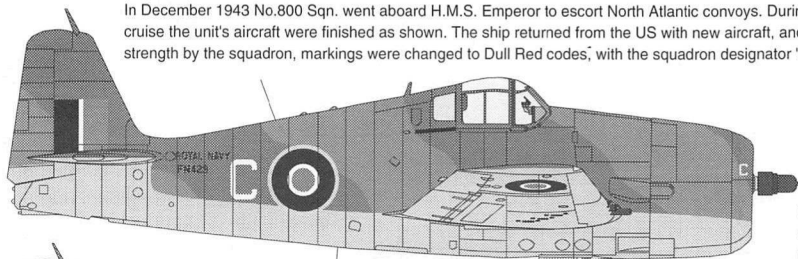
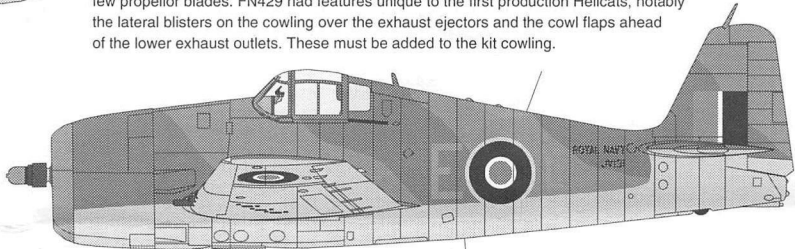
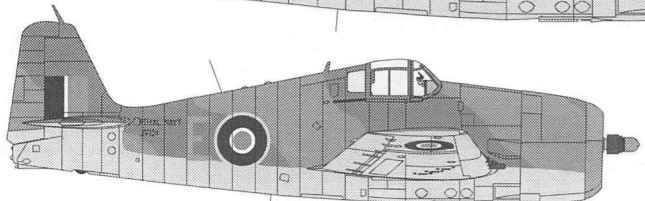


Grumman Gannet Mk.I FN429, No.800 Squadron, RNAS Eglinton, late 1943.

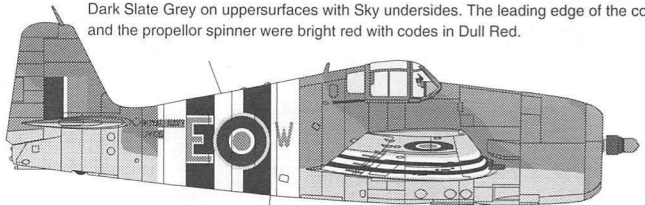
In December 1943 No.800 Sqn. went aboard H.M.S. Emperor to escort North Atlantic convoys. During their training and on the first cruise the unit's aircraft were finished as shown. The ship returned from the US with new aircraft, and when they were taken on strength by the squadron, markings were changed to Dull Red codes, with the squadron designator 'E' flanking the roundel.





FN429 was one of the first aircraft received by the FAA, in mid-1943. The original British name was the Gannet, but this was quickly changed to Hellcat when it was realized the aircraft had too few propeller blades. FN429 had features unique to the first production Hellcats, notably the lateral blisters on the cowling over the exhaust ejectors and the cowl flaps ahead of the lower exhaust outlets. These must be added to the kit cowling.



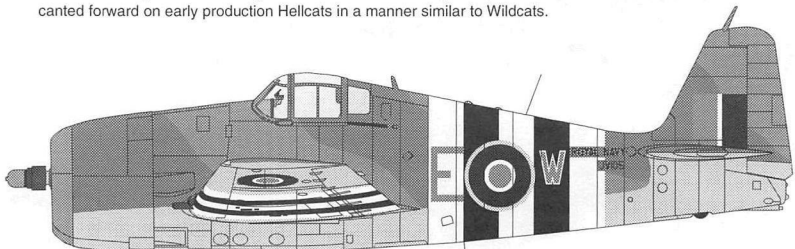
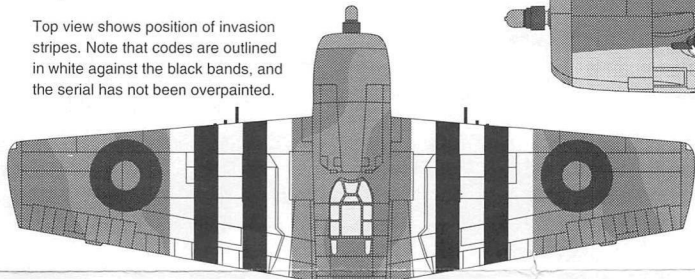
Hellcat Mk.I JV131, March 1944. This is the scheme worn by the unit's aircraft after the inaugural cruise aboard H.M.S. Emperor and for the attacks on the Tirpitz. Colour are standard for the FAA Temperate Sea Scheme, Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey on uppersurfaces with Sky undersides. The leading edge of the cowl and the propeller spinner were bright red with codes in Dull Red.



Both JV105 and JV131 were from a later batch of aircraft, after the cowl flaps and lateral blisters had been eliminated. They were essentially identical to USN F6F-3s apart from the truncated radio mast, which was canted forward on early production Hellcats in a manner similar to Wildcats.

-  Extra Dark Sea Grey 36099
-  Dark Slate Grey 34096
-  Sky Type 'S' 34424

Top view shows position of invasion stripes. Note that codes are outlined in white against the black bands, and the serial has not been overpainted.

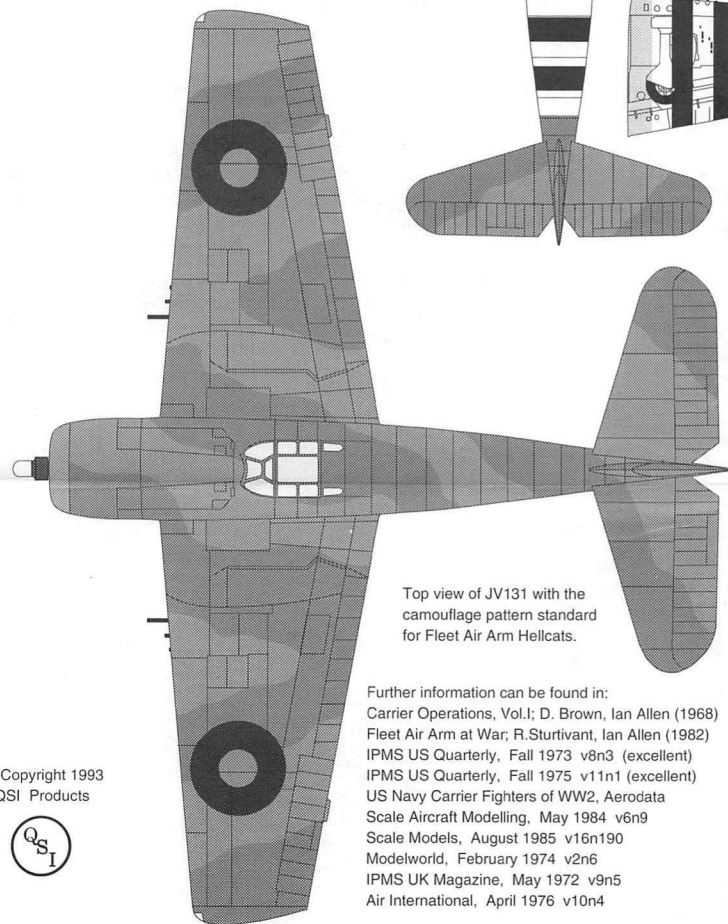


Hellcat Mk.I JV105, mid-1944. Scheme is identical to JV131 apart from the addition of D-Day stripes to wings and fuselage. Along with other British carriers, H.M.S. Emperor provided air cover for the D-Day landings, and aircraft from the ship were marked with the invasion stripes common to Allied aircraft. In mid-June No.804 Squadron, the second FAA Hellcat squadron also aboard H.M.S. Emperor, was merged with No.800 Sqn. The ship remained on station until August, when it was sent into the Mediterranean to support the Allied landings in the south of France. After that, the U-Boats had been defeated - Allied troops had secured the Luftwaffe airfields in France, and the Admiralty concluded their carriers could be put to better use in the Pacific. H.M.S. Emperor was sent into the Indian Ocean to join the British Eastern Fleet, and FAA Hellcats disappeared from European skies.

Markings for other FAA Hellcats are available from **TALLY HO!** #7120 has markings for four East Indies Fleet Hellcats, ca. 1945, #7121 has markings for a Hellcat FR.Mk.II of the East Indies Fleet, 1945, and #7123 features two aircraft from H.M.S.Indomitable, Pacific Fleet in 1945 (roundel with bar).

Modelling the Hellcat Mk.I:

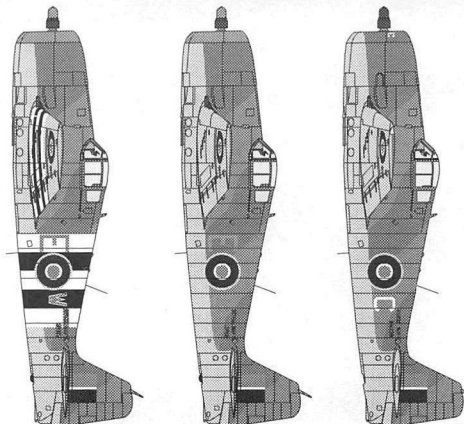
The best kit to use is the new Minicraft kit, although the Hasegawa kit is also quite nice. The aircraft featured on this decal sheet are Hellcat Mk.Is, the FAA equivalent of the F6F-3, and the kit will need to be modified to that standard. The most obvious change is the addition of the rear cockpit windows. The early aircraft had an internal armoured windscreen with additional framing, and additional parts are provided in the kit to aid in making these changes. The kit does not provide for the other differences: on FN429 there are additional cooling flaps on the bottom of the cowling and small blisters over the lateral exhaust ports. The antenna mast is of the early, canted style, albeit truncated. Finally, and this will bother you only as much as you let it, the outer wing of the F6F-3/Hellcat I was different from the F6F-5 wing, and some of the kit panel lines need to be filled and new lines scribed to reflect this difference. The two-part feature in USQuarterly has an excellent description of the differences between various Hellcats, and the Aerodata plans are equally useful. The articles in the Quarterly and Air International provide good information to detail the interior, and once this is done, vacuform canopies are available from Falcon or Squadron.



Top view of JV131 with the camouflage pattern standard for Fleet Air Arm Hellcats.

Further information can be found in:
 Carrier Operations, Vol.I; D. Brown, Ian Allen (1968)
 Fleet Air Arm at War; R. Sturivant, Ian Allen (1982)
 IPMS US Quarterly, Fall 1973 v8n3 (excellent)
 IPMS US Quarterly, Fall 1975 v11n1 (excellent)
 US Navy Carrier Fighters of WW2, Aerodata
 Scale Aircraft Modelling, May 1984 v6n9
 Scale Models, August 1985 v16n190
 Modelworld, February 1974 v2n6
 IPMS UK Magazine, May 1972 v9n5
 Air International, April 1976 v10n4

**7022 - Hellcat Mk.I, No. 800 Squadron
 H.M.S. Emperor, Atlantic Operations**
 Aircraft Markings for the Modelling World



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