

'633 Squadron'

The work of Film Aviation Services Ltd. in providing the flying scenes for the forthcoming film

by Graeme Weir

Two of the Mosquitos at Bovington with 500-lb. G.P. bombs in the foreground



ENTERING BOVINGTON AIRPORT recently was to step back twenty years in time, for here were all the trappings of a wartime operational airfield—created for the Mirisch Films Ltd. production of "633 Squadron". The story, from the novel by Frederick E. Smith, concerns the exploits of a fictitious Mosquito squadron and culminates with a hair-raising attack along a Norwegian fiord to lob 4,000-lb. bombs into a secret underground rocket-fuel plant.

For the flying sequences Mirisch Films retained the services of Capt. John Crewdson's Film Aviation Services Ltd. The first task was to obtain as many Mosquitos as possible, and ultimately no less than eleven were located. All of the aircraft had at one time been with No. 3 C.A.A.C.U. at Exeter, but were by now in various ownerships. Of the nine or ten brought to Bovington only five were fully airworthy, three could be taxied, and the others were used in a static role.

The aircraft were modified to resemble FB.VIs by painting over the nose Perspex, thus giving a "solid" effect. Some aircraft had dummy .303 Browning machine guns fixed to their noses, but the 20-mm. cannon troughs were not bothered with.

Accurate grey/green camouflage of the mid-war period has been applied, and the "Squadron" given the code letters "HT". These letters were used by Nos. 601 and 154 Squadrons, both of which flew single-engine fighters.

Fake serials have been applied and appear to correspond to the 1942-44 allocations. Incidentally, Mosquito HT-C (later "crashed" as HJ898 "HT-G") bore the serial HJ662 which, with the suffix

Mosquitos being used in the film

Original Serial No.	Mark	Film identity (where known)	Owner	Remarks
RR299 RS709	T.3 TT.35	— HT-D; HR.113 (Also flown as HT-G)	de Havilland Mirisch Films Ltd.	Not used Flying
RS712 RS718	TT.35 TT.35	HT-F; RF.580 HT-C; HJ.662	Mirisch Films Ltd. F.A.S. Ltd.	Flying Taxi-ing only. (Later "crashed" as HT-G) Possibly not used
TA634 TA639 TA642 TA719 TA724 TV959	TT.35 TT.35 TT.35 TT.35 TT.35 T.3	— — — HT-G; HJ.898 —	R.A.F. R.A.F. F.A.S. Ltd. Peter F. M. Thomas F.A.S. Ltd.	Flying Flying Taxi-ing only Flying Taxi-ing only
TW117	T.3	Probably HT-P; MM.398 HT-M; HR.155	Science Museum R.A.F.	Scrap; used for cockpit shots Flying

/G, was the serial of the prototype FB.VI. It proved impossible to tie up all the film serials *vis-à-vis* the original serials as no accurate records were kept when the machines were painted for the film. Furthermore, some aircraft played several roles—RS709, for instance, has flown both as "G-George" and as "D-Dog", and no less than three other Mosquitos have been "G-George" at various times.

The air photography has been done by Gregg Board's famous B-25, flown over from the States for this purpose. It also appears in the film, wearing R.A.F. markings and the serial N308Z.

The good people of Bucks must by now be used to having World War II going on above their heads, for it is less than two

years since Capt. Crewdson roared in with the three B-17s he ferried over from Arizona for the film "The War Lover". During recent weeks much hairy flying has been done from Bovington, and more is to follow with the imminent move of the unit to Scotland. There, the raid sequences will be flown, using a loch as stand-in for the fiord.

Sequences filmed at Bovington included extreme low-level formation flying, a simulated mid-air collision, and an attack on the airfield by Me 109s. For this sequence two Bf 108 Taifuns were flown over from France and, when painted, made quite realistic 109s. Probably the most publicised sequence was when Capt. Crewdson, doubling as the hero, deliberately retracted the undercarriage of a specially prepared Mosquito whilst travelling at high speed across the airfield. This was, in fact, even more hazardous than it appears, but Capt. Crewdson knew just what he was doing and all went smoothly.

I was fortunate enough to go on one of the sorties from Bovington. The aircraft was RS709, flown by one of Crewdson's pilots, F/Lt. J. R. Hawke (of Wattisham



Preparing "HT-G" for the crash. Originally TA642 was to be used, but its undercarriage collapsed prematurely and RS718 took over