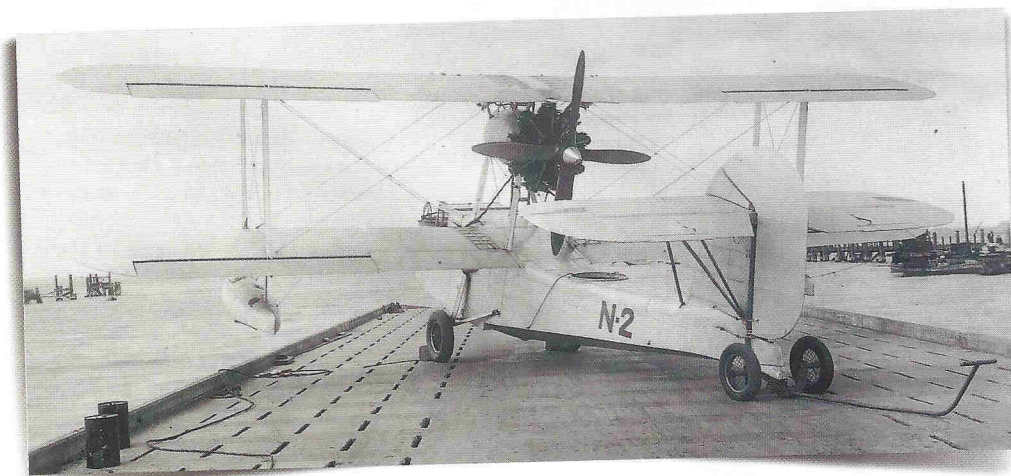




GUARDIAN Angels

RAF air-sea rescue Walruses saved thousands of lives, often while putting themselves in harm's way. Daniel Ford describes their use



from Mitchell that owed only format and name to its predecessor... to the Australians the type was known as the Seagull V.

The prototype was first flown by 'Mutt' Summers on June 21, 1933. Five days later, the prototype was in the 'New Types' park at the Hendon airshow. During his flying display, 'Mutt' showed that the gangling amphibian had aspirations to be a fighter – he looped it!

The Australians were 'sold', they ordered 24 in August 1934. Their first example was accepted in September 1935.

"During his flying display, 'Mutt' showed that the gangling amphibian had aspirations to be a fighter – he looped it!"

NO MATTER HOW it is viewed, the Supermarine Walrus can hardly be said to be attractive, though it is certainly full of character.

Furthermore, it came to be a very well-loved aircraft. To a ditched airman, drenched through, freezing and close to an enemy coast, there can have been no more appealing sight than the approach of a Walrus.

With its angular looks, pusher propeller and webs of bracing wire, it is difficult to appreciate that the

TOP: Well-known 'staged' rescue photo of a 276 Squadron Walrus taxiing towards a 'downed' pilot. See the panel for additional details.

The prototype Seagull V during Air Ministry trials.

Walrus and the Spitfire had the same designer – Reginald Joseph Mitchell. Three years separated the first flight of their respective prototypes.

The Walrus owes its origins to a Royal Australian Air Force requirement to replace its Seagull III amphibians. Supermarine responded with a design

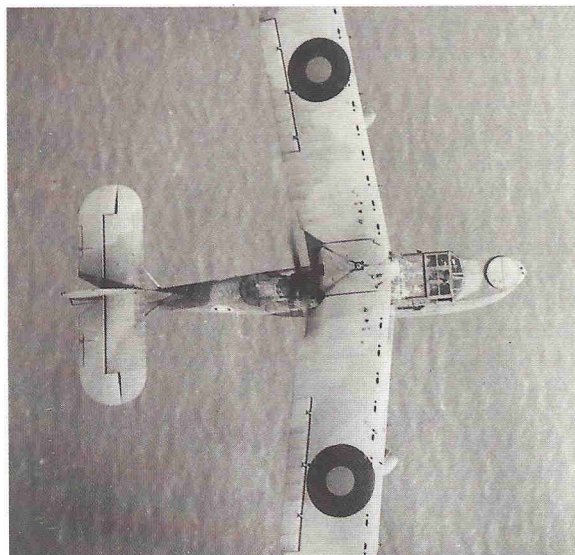
The Air Ministry showed some interest and the prototype was put through extensive trials. The Type 228, as Supermarine called it, was capable of a wide range of tasks, including anti-submarine patrol, reconnaissance and re-supply. It could be catapulted from ships and recovered via a crane

while water taxiing alongside its 'mother'.

The evaluation was a success and the first order for the Fleet Air Arm was placed in April 1935, as the Type 236, with the name Walrus being adopted in August. Production of the Walrus amounted to 746 units, with the bulk being completed by Saunders-Roe as Supermarine had more than enough on its plate with producing the Spitfire in quantity.

RESCUE FROM THE SKY

The story of the Walrus in Fleet Air Arm service is a fascinating one, but it is not for us here. Our concern is with the 250 or so that were transferred to the RAF for front-



Walruses became well worn in service. A Fleet Air Arm example from an unusual angle.

Fabulous sight for a downed aircrew – a Walrus overhead.

obvious from its inception on October 21, 1941. Westland Lysander IIIs and Walrus Is and IIs (the latter with wooden hulls) formed the initial equipment.

Other types were operated during 276's life –

degree of succour. The Warwicks could locate 'clients' and drop airborne lifeboats, but it fell to the Walruses to carry out the often crucial pick-ups.

Like other ASR squadrons, 276 had a huge 'beat' and to meet its commitments operated a wide ranging series of detachments from its headquarters, Harrowbeer in Devon. These out-stations were Fairwood Common, Wales; Perranporth, Cornwall; Portreath, Cornwall and Warmwell, Dorset.

By August 1944 the eastern coast of the Channel was becoming more and more secure and the opportunity to provide ASR coverage from *that* side was not lost on the RAF. A detachment was established near Cherbourg, and in October the whole unit decamped and established itself at St Croix in Belgium, plus other detachments up the coast.

A SURVIVOR'S TALE

After service with the Fleet Air Arm's 751 Squadron (see page 76) W2718 joined 276 Squadron at Knocke in Belgium on April 13, 1945, and took on the code letters 'AQ-Z'. In June 1945 the unit drew back to the UK and settled upon Andrews Field, Essex.

This was only short-lived as the



line service for air-sea rescue (ASR).

With a maximum speed of 135mph (217km/h) the Walrus was the slowest of the RAF's front-line aircraft of World War Two. But speed was not among its main attributes, these lay in its robustness, reliability and the determination of its crews to get the job done.

It was not until October 1941 that the Walrus joined the RAF. The first of six UK-based squadrons, Nos.275 at Valley, Anglesey and 278 at Matlaske, Norfolk, were set up to provide the beginning of extended coastal coverage. Each operated a series of detachments to extend their 'reach'.

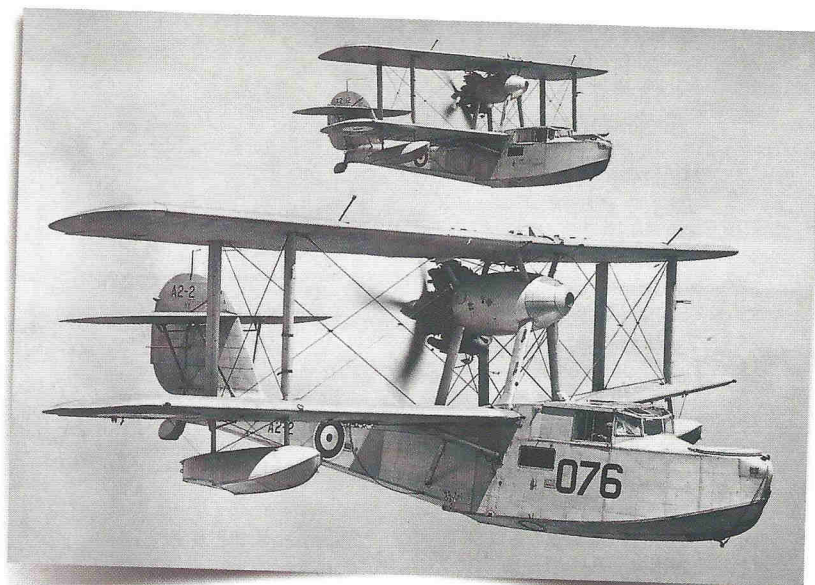
From 1943 more and more Walrus units were added, into the Mediterranean, the Gulf and in support of the Burma campaign. The last Walruses were retired from the RAF in the spring of 1946. It was not until the advent of the ASR helicopter in the mid-1950s that the RAF truly found a replacement.

THE RETRIEVERS

One such Walrus ASR unit was 276 Squadron, which operated survivor W2718 — see page 76. With a badge depicting a retriever's head and the motto 'Retrieve', the unit's role was

No.276's 'Century'

The famous publicity photograph that forms the heading photograph — and was cleared by Censor No.273641 — featured a 276 Squadron Walrus and was released on July 12, 1943. The caption that came with it described the inter-linked roles of the unit's Spitfires in locating baled-out pilots, dropping dinghies to them and then helping the Walrus make a pick-up. At that time, 276 was the first unit to break the 'century' of pick-ups, having a score of 177. In June 1943 it rescued 37 men from the sea, 33 of them USAAF airmen within the space of 24 hours. This was the result of a B-17 raid on the dock gates of St Nazaire on the 28th.



A pair of RAAF Seagull Vs on a pre-delivery sortie.

ALL KEY—GORDON SWANBOROUGH COLLECTION

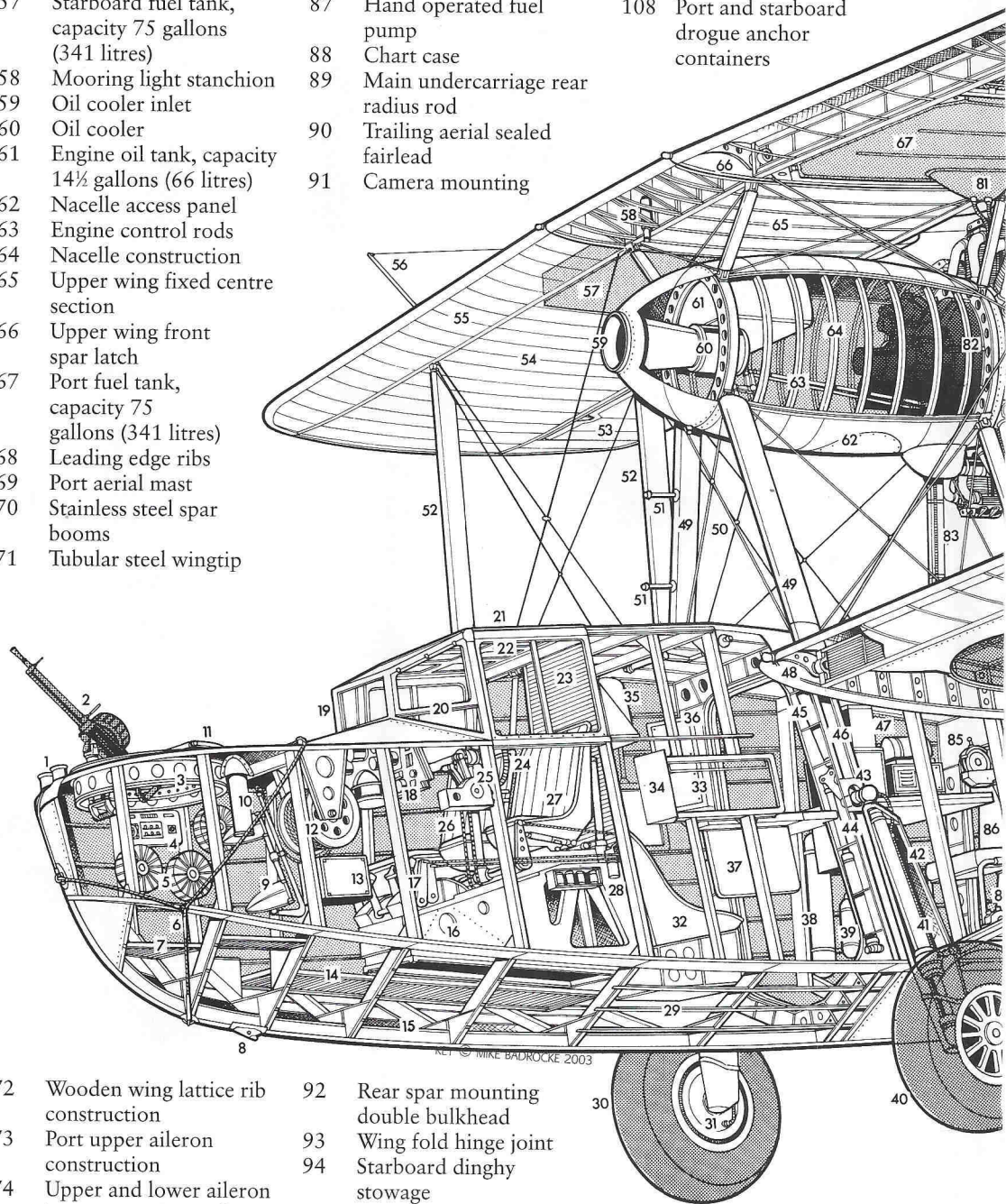
Boulton Paul Defiants, Spitfire IIs and Vs, Avro Anson Is and Vickers Warwick Is. Of this mixture, the Walrus with its unique abilities was the longest serving, from formation to disbandment.

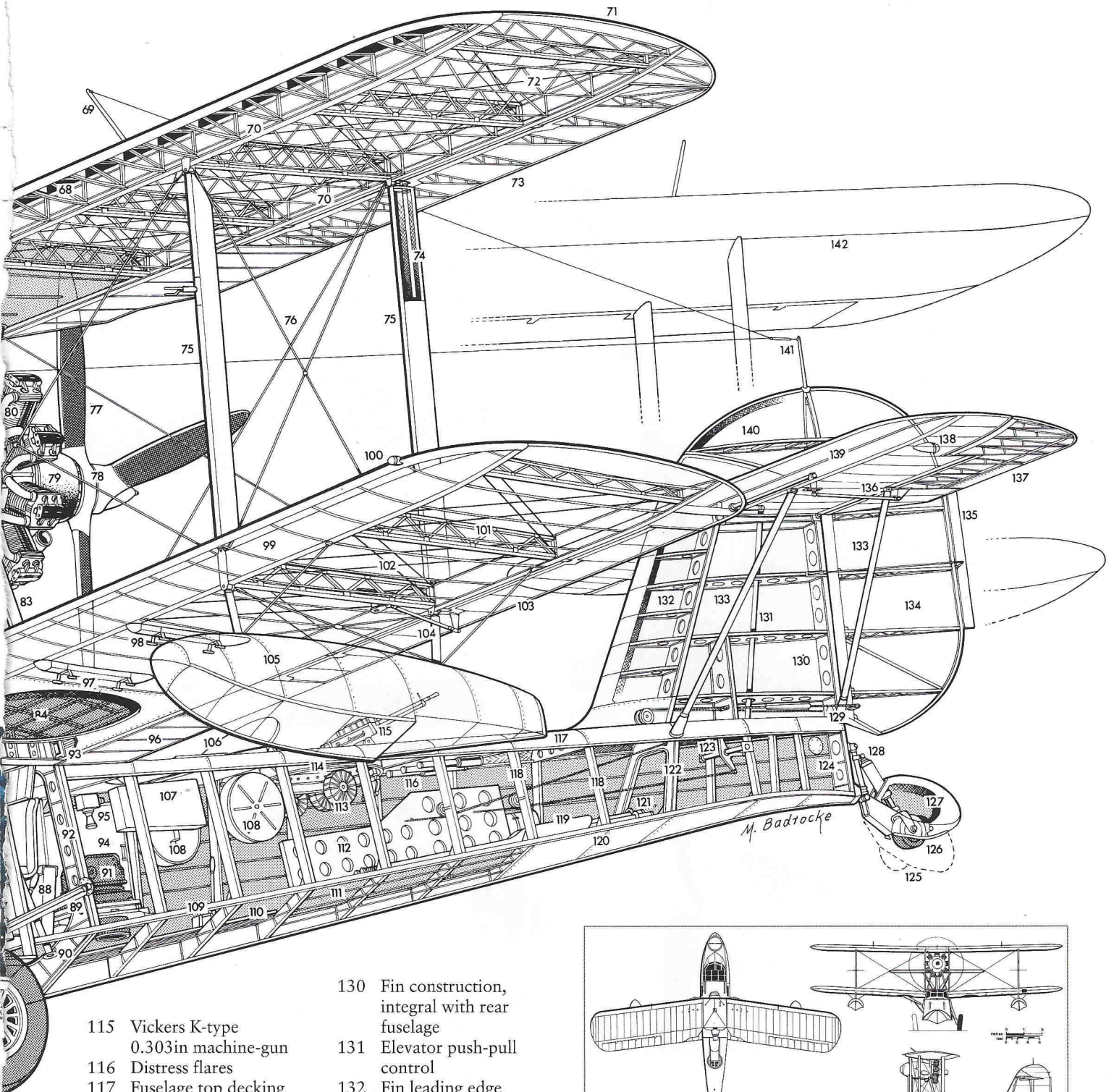
The Ansons, Lysanders, Defiants and Spitfires were used for finding downed crews and could drop limited supplies and dinghies to provide a

unit had one more overseas deployment to undertake. In August it moved in its entirety to Kjevik in Norway, later moving its main base to Gardermoen near Oslo. This last adventure came to an end when 276, including W2718, ferried in stages to Dunsfold, Surrey, arriving there on November 10, 1945. Thus ended a five-year period of intense flying with countless people owing their respect — if not their lives — to 276 and its ASR Walruses.

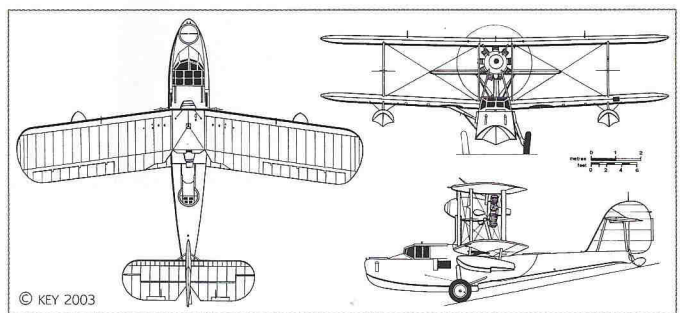
SUPERMARINE WALRUS II

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1 | Mooring bollards | 50 | Diagonal wire bracing | 80 | Bristol Pegasus VI | 101 | Steel compression ribs |
| 2 | Vickers K-type 0.303in machine-gun | 51 | Steps to upper wing surface | 81 | nine-cylinder air-cooled radial | 102 | Wing internal wire bracing |
| 3 | Machine-gun mounting ring | 52 | Starboard wing interplane struts | 82 | Fuel tank sump | 103 | Port lower aileron |
| 4 | Bomb control panel | 53 | Starboard aileron | 83 | Engine mounting ring | 104 | Aileron control horn |
| 5 | Spare ammunition drums | 54 | Wing fabric covering | 84 | Nacelle rear struts | 105 | Port wingtip float |
| 6 | Mooring cable | 55 | Plywood covered leading edge | 85 | Main undercarriage wheel well | 106 | Rear gunner's sliding hatch cover, open |
| 7 | Front gunner's platform | 56 | Starboard aerial mast | 86 | Trailing aerial winch | 107 | Rear gunner's seat, stowed |
| 8 | Hein Matt seaplane recovery gear attachment | 57 | Starboard fuel tank, capacity 75 gallons (341 litres) | 87 | Radio operator's seat | 108 | Port and starboard drogue anchor containers |
| 9 | Anchor stowage | 58 | Mooring light stanchion | 88 | Hand operated fuel pump | | |
| 10 | Thermometer housing | 59 | Oil cooler inlet | 89 | Chart case | | |
| 11 | Bow hatch, open | 60 | Oil cooler | 90 | Main undercarriage rear radius rod | | |
| 12 | Anchor cable winch | 61 | Engine oil tank, capacity 14½ gallons (66 litres) | 91 | Trailing aerial sealed fairlead | | |
| 13 | Compass stowage | 62 | Nacelle access panel | | Camera mounting | | |
| 14 | Front fuselage walkway | 63 | Engine control rods | | | | |
| 15 | Keel V-frames | 64 | Nacelle construction | | | | |
| 16 | Pilot's seat and flight control pedestal | 65 | Upper wing fixed centre section | | | | |
| 17 | Rudder pedals | 66 | Upper wing front spar latch | | | | |
| 18 | Instrument panel | 67 | Port fuel tank, capacity 75 gallons (341 litres) | | | | |
| 19 | Windscreen | 68 | Leading edge ribs | | | | |
| 20 | Direct vision windscreen panel | 69 | Port aerial mast | | | | |
| 21 | Sliding cockpit roof hatch | 70 | Stainless steel spar booms | | | | |
| 22 | Sliding side window panel | 71 | Tubular steel wingtip | | | | |
| 23 | Cockpit bulkhead | | | | | | |
| 24 | Control column handwheel | | | | | | |
| 25 | Engine throttle and mixture controls | | | | | | |
| 26 | Co-pilot's folding seat | | | | | | |
| 27 | Pilot's seat | | | | | | |
| 28 | Signal pistol and spare cartridges | | | | | | |
| 29 | Hull planing bottom stringer construction | | | | | | |
| 30 | Starboard mainwheel | | | | | | |
| 31 | Wheel brake disc | | | | | | |
| 32 | Navigator's seat | | | | | | |
| 33 | Cabin side windows | | | | | | |
| 34 | Wind and spray shield | | | | | | |
| 35 | Parachute stowage | | | | | | |
| 36 | Sea markers | | | | | | |
| 37 | Folding chart table | | | | | | |
| 38 | Pneumatic brake system air bottle | | | | | | |
| 39 | Fire extinguisher | | | | | | |
| 40 | Port mainwheel | | | | | | |
| 41 | Main undercarriage shock absorber leg strut | 72 | Wooden wing lattice rib construction | 92 | Rear spar mounting double bulkhead | | |
| 42 | Undercarriage leg fairing | 73 | Port upper aileron construction | 93 | Wing fold hinge joint | | |
| 43 | Pivot mounting | 74 | Upper and lower aileron interconnecting rod | 94 | Starboard dinghy stowage | | |
| 44 | Hydraulic retraction jack | 75 | Port interplane struts | 95 | Signal lamp | | |
| 45 | Upper balancing cylinder | 76 | Diagonal wire bracing | 96 | Folding portion of trailing edge | 109 | Bilge pump |
| 46 | Sloping fuselage double bulkhead | 77 | Supermarine two-part, four-bladed wooden pusher propeller, 10ft (3.05m) diameter | 97 | Inboard light series bomb carrier, 250lb (113kg) capacity | 110 | Rear fuselage walkway construction |
| 47 | Radio racks | 78 | Propeller hub fixing | 98 | Outboard light series bomb carrier, 100lb (45.4kg) capacity | 111 | Hull bottom construction |
| 48 | Wing fold front spar latch | 79 | Engine reduction gearbox | 99 | Port lower wing panel | 112 | Rear gunner's folding floor panel |
| 49 | Engine nacelle front mounting struts | | | 100 | Port navigation light | 113 | Spare ammunition drums |
| | | | | | | 114 | Rear gun mounting ring |





- 115 Vickers K-type 0.303in machine-gun
- 116 Distress flares
- 117 Fuselage top decking
- 118 Rear fuselage frames
- 119 Dinghy paddles
- 120 Hull skin plating
- 121 Jury strut stowage
- 122 Sloping fin bulkhead
- 123 Elevator control rocking shaft
- 124 Sternpost
- 125 Water rudder, lowered position
- 126 Tailwheel
- 127 Water rudder
- 128 Tailwheel leg strut
- 129 Rudder cable control
- 130 Fin construction, integral with rear fuselage
- 131 Elevator push-pull control
- 132 Fin leading edge construction
- 133 Tailplane bracing struts
- 134 Fabric covered rudder construction
- 135 Rudder tab
- 136 Elevator control horn
- 137 Port elevator
- 138 Tail navigation light
- 139 Port tailplane
- 140 Rudder aerodynamic balance
- 141 Rear aerial mast
- 142 Port wing, folded position



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Supermarine Walrus II

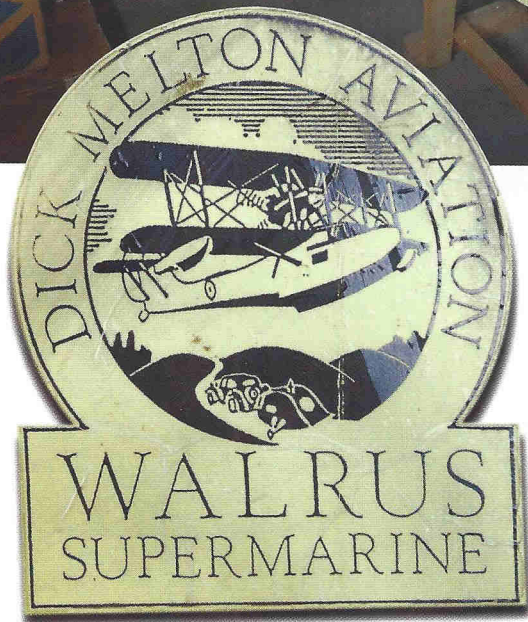
Powerplant: One 775hp (578kW) Bristol Pegasus VI nine-cylinder air-cooled radial 'pusher' engine.

Dimensions: Span 45ft 10in (13.96m). Length 37ft 7in (11.45m). Height 15ft 3in (4.64m). Wing area 610ft² (56.66m²).

Weights: Empty 4,905lb (2,224kg). Loaded 7,200lb (3,265kg).

Performance: Max speed at 5,000ft (1,500m), 135mph (217km/h). Cruise 95mph (152km/h). Range 600 miles (965km). Service ceiling 18,500ft (5,600m).

Armament: Maximum of three Vickers K-type 0.303in machine-guns. Up to 500lbs (226kg) of bombs or depth charges.



'Tis time, the Walrus said...

... to move on. Dick Melton's exceptional amphibian project is for sale

TOP: Dick Melton's incredible Walrus project. One of four of the type surviving and the only one that will fly again.

ABOVE: The logo devised for the Walrus project.
ALL KEY—DUNCAN CUBITT
UNLESS NOTED

“IT WILL BREAK my heart to see it go, but it must.” Words from Dick Melton, widely regarded as *the* expert in Spitfire restoration and recreation. But not just Spitfires, Dick has also rebuilt and restored the world's fourth Supermarine Walrus – and this is the only one that will ever fly again.

Dick was chief engineer for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and it was there that he honed his passion and knowledge for Supermarine types and other 'warbirds'. Beyond that he worked for

Warbirds of Great Britain before establishing Dick Melton Aviation and running the Spitfire 'production line' and warbird 'stable' for Charles Church.

Dick had always wanted a Walrus. His extensive searches came to fruition in 1989 when he acquired Mk.I W2718 from Southampton, Hants. Its last period of existence had been as a motorised caravan!

Built in 1940, W2718 served with 764 and 751 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm. It transferred to 276 Squadron, RAF, up to June 1945. (See the May

1993 *FlyPast* for the full story.)

In late 1989 Dick moved his treasure to Charles Church's airstrip near Winchester, Hants. Here it became Dick's personal project, using time woven in between recreating Spitfires and running the rest of Church's impressive warbird fleet.

With the death of Charles in the crash of Spitfire V G-MKVC in July 1989, the operation at Winchester began to scale down and the last Spitfire (Tr.IX G-CTIX) left the airstrip in July 1994. In mid-1995 Dick and his wife Carole moved to a location near



The tailfin and rudder post.



Tailplane during layout.



Superb workmanship – the tailwheel yoke and components.

The caravan element of W2718 is loaded up in late 1989 to move to Dick's workshop.

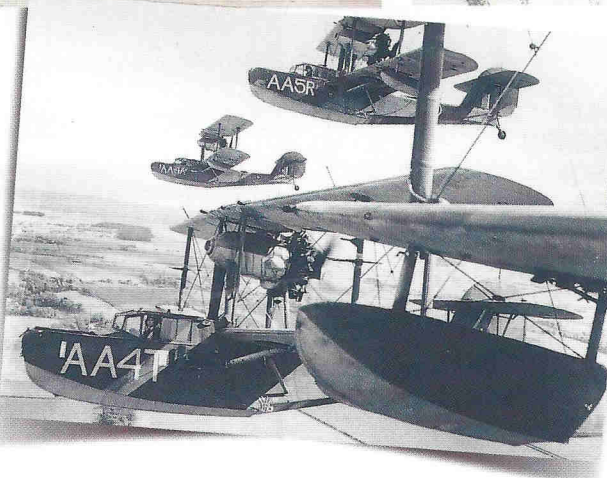
VIA DICK MELTON



Walrus survivors

Seagull V A2-4	RAF Museum, Hendon, UK
Walrus I L2301	Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton, UK
Walrus I W2718	Dick Melton Aviation, Norfolk. Registered as G-RNLI.
Walrus I HD874	RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Australia.

Notes: The type was ordered as a development of the Seagull 'family' by the RAAF and with them it was designated Seagull Mk.V. The RAF named the type Walrus in August 1935.



Wonderful formation of 751 Squadron Walruses operating out of Dundee in 1943. W2718 served this unit as 'AA5Y'.
FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

Vast quantities of spares and 'extras' are carefully held in countless annotated boxes, kept in rack after rack. The inhibited Bristol Pegasus engine, complete with pod-like nacelle, awaits its moment. Two tailplanes are at hand, the pilot's seat is ready to install, the combined rear wheel and water rudder are awaiting re-assembly.

In short, all that is needed to create the dream of a Walrus in the air is here. The project needs time and money, and Dick is convinced the right person is out there to take on this incredible creation. The entire package is ready and waiting in Norfolk – contact Dick on 01692 670107.

Dick still pauses for a moment when he hears the sound of a Merlin. He ponders: "Is that one of mine?" With his considerable involvement in warbirds and Spitfires in particular, there's every chance the answer will be 'Yes'. That feeling will never, ever go away for Dick.

'Retirement' is not a word that one can associate with Dick Melton. He's putting his efforts into the running of a trawler out of Lowestoft. And, like everything Dick is involved with, you can bet it's the best there is! KEN ELIUS

Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, taking the Walrus with them.

Actually, it was more the other way around. The search for a 'retirement' home was dictated by the need for a building big enough to assemble the Walrus project and to complete the work.

Such a location was found, although it took Dick time to bring the building up to his standards. That's the workshop of course. The Melton family home alongside will just have to wait!

Now Dick has come to the conclusion that he will have to pass

the baton on to someone else to finish the project and put the Walrus into the air. Had Dick stayed in the warbird 'industry' there is no doubt it would be flying by now.

In Dick's words, "the major lump is done". All the paperwork is complete. Each element of the reconstruction signed off. There are rows of manuals and drawings.

The octagonal spars are all formed and come with the tooling to create them. There are a hand-made rollers to make the ribs and other sections, and jigs and tools a-plenty.