



The squadron began flying Nieuport 27 fighters in 1917. RAF (AHB)/© UK MoD Crown Copyright 2015

From January 1918 No. 1 began receiving the excellent RAF S.E.5A to replace its Nieuports. With the new aircraft it fought savagely to the Armistice, when the S.E.5As were returned to the UK and destroyed, the squadron finally disbanding in January 1920.

Inter-war Action

A resurgent No. 1 Sqn simultaneously stood up at Risalpur, India, moving to Bangalore to train on the Sopwith Snipe and, briefly, the Nieuport Nighthawk, then, in April 1921, on to Hinaidi, Iraq. In spring 1925 the squadron, now officially 1(F), flew strafing attacks as it assisted in settling tribal unrest, continuing in action until disbanded on November 1, 1926.

The following February saw it reform at Tangmere, Sussex on the Armstrong Whitworth Siskin IIIA, an aircraft it retained until February 1932, when the Hawker Fury I took over. Capable of more than 200mph (322km/h), the Fury also provided No. 1(F) with a spectacular aerobatic mount. The squadron formed a display team and flew it at the 1932 Hendon Display, as well as becoming the first RAF squadron to visit North America, when the team toured Canada in 1934.

Back at home war clouds had begun to gather and the Furies lost their silver finish and bright unit markings in favour of green and brown camouflage. Their time in warpaint was limited, however, since the first 1(F) Sqn Hurricane arrived at Tangmere in February 1939. Assigned to the Allied Air Striking Force, the squadron deployed to France on the outbreak of war.

"...every member of the team is proud of our heritage and history, and determined to maintain the high standards and finest traditions of those who have gone before."

Wing Commander Mike 'Sooty' Sutton, OC 1(F) Sqn

Wing Commander Mike 'Sooty' Sutton, OC 1(F) Sqn. © UK MoD Crown Copyright 2015



This formation of 1 Sqn Snipes was up near Baghdad in 1926. RAF (AHB)/© UK MoD Crown Copyright 2015

World War Two

On October 31, 1939 a Dornier Do 17 fell to the guns of Plt Off Mould's 1 Sqn Hurricane and once again the unit was in combat. The fighting was fierce, especially after May 10, 1940, when German troops marched into France. As the Allies were forced back towards the Channel, so 1 Sqn staged between bases in a fighting retreat. Initially involved in escorting Fairey Battles in their epic but ultimately wasted attempts to slow the advance, the squadron remained on the Continent until June 17, when its surviving Hurricanes flew back to Tangmere.

There was barely time to catch breath before No. 1 was operational again on July 3, engaging Luftwaffe aircraft over the Channel as operations built up ahead of the battle to come. The squadron engaged completely during the Battle of Britain, pilots typically flying two sorties every day and the CO totalling 66 in August alone.

Today's No. 1(F) is taking care to look back at that difficult period with pride in this anniversary year, as Wg Cdr Sutton explained when he spoke to *Salute* in April: "The RAF is marking the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain with events throughout the year. We're looking forward to flying over Buckingham Palace in June to mark the anniversary, and we'll be attending ceremonies and services in the coming months to celebrate the occasion and remember the terrible loss and sacrifice made by so many of our brave airmen all those years ago."

Turning to the offensive in 1941, No. 1 Sqn (the 'F' had been dropped in May 1939) soon re-equipped with the Hurricane II, especially appreciating the Mk IIC and its four-cannon armament. This proved particularly effective as the new CO, Sqn Ldr J MacLachan worked with Sgt Kuttelwascher, a Czech pilot, on developing night tactics. The squadron then specialised in night intruder work, until re-equipping again, this time with the Hawker Typhoon.

Typhoon work-up began in July 1942 and in September the squadron claimed its first kills with the type – two Messerschmitt Me 210s. Subsequent Typhoon operations included chasing down fast-flying, low-level Focke-Wulf Fw 190 fighter-bombers delivering 'tip-and-run' attacks along the south coast and, into 1944, escorting the Typhoons of fighter-bomber squadrons as they attacked targets in France. »