

SOPWITH

CAMEL

● Fighter scout ● Close support fighter ● Flown by aces



VINTAGE AND
VETERAN



SAMPLE! It was a wicked, snub-nosed killer. The Sopwith Camel gave Britain a fighter capable of defeating any adversary in the 'Kaiser's War'. But the Camel was not for the faint-hearted, and was mastered only with the most superb flying skills. The Camel's bad habits were also its strength: because propeller, engine and armament were concentrated up front, the Camel was difficult to fly but was also incredibly manoeuvrable in a dogfight.

▲ The Camel at last gave Allied fighter pilots an aircraft that could take on the German Albatros and Fokker scouts, and did much to restore morale.

Sopwith's finest fighting scout

The Camel was introduced in 1917, initially as a fighter for the Royal Naval Air Service and soon afterward for the Royal Flying Corps. From its first appearance at the Battle of Ypres, the Camel proved itself to be an agile and potent pursuit craft.

CAMEL

This Camel served on the Western Front in 1918 with 'B' flight, 210 Squadron RAF, previously 10 (Naval) Squadron RNAS.

The Camel got its (unofficial) name from the small 'hump' fairing over the twin Vickers guns.

In common with most aircraft of the time, the Camel was driven by a simple fixed-pitch wooden propeller.

Camels used a number of different engines including the Clerget, Le Rhone 9J and Gnome Monosoupape.

Many rotary engines were flown in the Camel and numerous versions were built, including a night-fighter with a pair of Lewis guns mounted above the top wing centre section.

Most Camels lifted off noisily from grass strips to fly to the Front and beyond, to engage

Fokker, Pfalz and other German warplanes. Some of these high-performing Sopwiths had special tasks, however: several went to sea aboard the aircraft-carriers HMS *Furious* and *Pegasus* or were catapulted from atop turrets on other warships. Two Camels were modified for trials as parasite fighters, carried aboard the airship R.23.

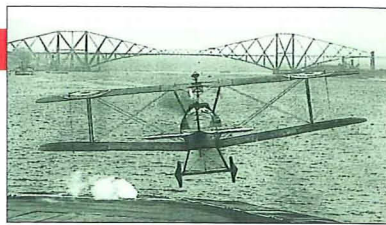
Camels served in several foreign air forces, including those of Belgium and Greece as well as with the American Expeditionary Force.

Twin ammunition feed chutes led from stowage bins to the guns, which were cocked by large levers. Although the Vickers guns were generally reliable, many pilots kept a hammer in the cockpit to enable them to clear jams.

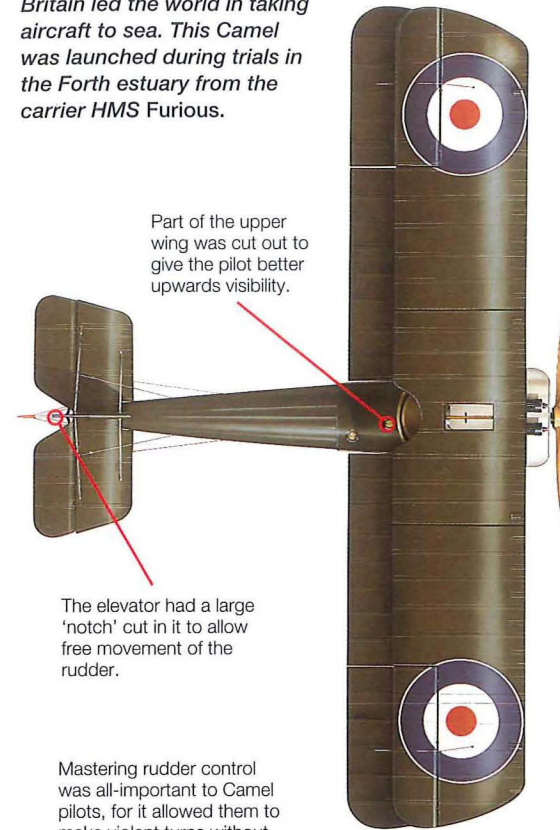
The forward fuselage contained the engine, fuel, pilot and guns. This concentration of weight and the high torque led to the tricky handling that made Camels infamous.

The outer fuselage skin was aluminium around the engine, plywood around the centre section and fabric around the rear section.

A simple tailskid was fitted, with an elastic cord shock-absorber.



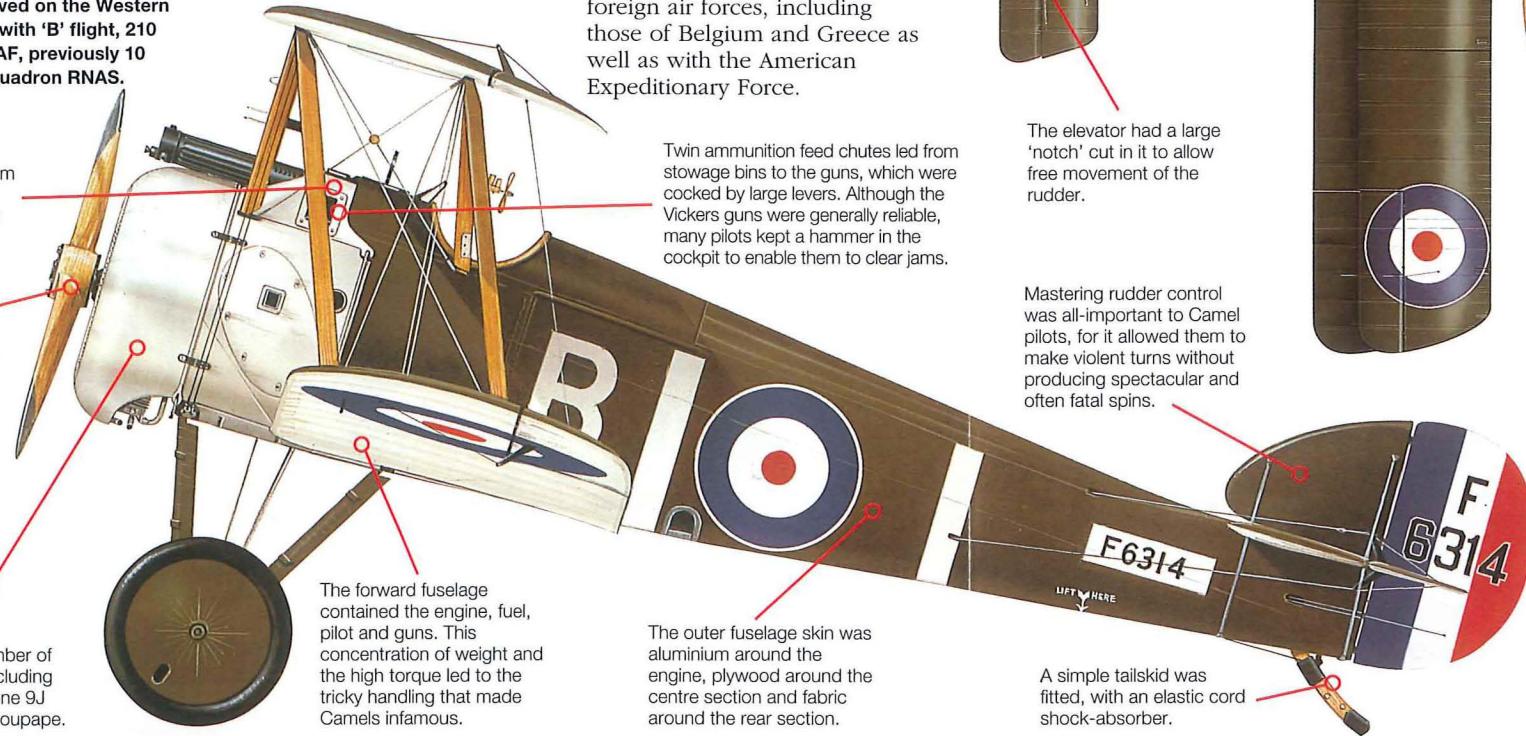
Britain led the world in taking aircraft to sea. This Camel was launched during trials in the Forth estuary in the carrier HMS *Furious*.



Part of the upper wing was cut out to give the pilot better upwards visibility.

The elevator had a large 'notch' cut in it to allow free movement of the rudder.

Mastering rudder control was all-important to Camel pilots, for it allowed them to make violent turns without producing spectacular and often fatal spins.



SPECIFICATIONS Camel F.I

Type: single-seat fighting scout

Powerplant: one 97-kW Clerget nine-cylinder air-cooled rotary piston engine

Maximum speed: 188 km/h at sea level

Climb rate: 10 minutes to 3000 m

Endurance: 2 hours 30 minutes

Service ceiling: 5790 m

Weights: empty 421 kg; maximum take-off 659 kg

Armament: two 7.7-mm Vickers machine-guns on nose synchronised to fire through the propeller, plus four 11.35-kg bombs carried on external racks beneath the fuselage

Dimensions:

span	8.53 m
length	5.72 m
height	2.60 m
wing area	21.46 m ²

COMBAT DATA

MAXIMUM SPEED

The Camel was reasonably fast and had a speed advantage over the Albatros D.V which appeared at the same time. Other Allied fighters like the SPAD and the S.E.5 were considerably quicker, but lacked the Camel's incredible agility.

CAMEL	188 km/h
ALBATROS D.V	165 km/h
SPAD XIII	215 km/h

ENDURANCE

British fighters were generally more aggressive than their opponents, and scouts usually operated over enemy territory. They needed to be able to stay in the air longer than German machines which, with a few notable exceptions, patrolled close to their home airfields.

CAMEL	ALBATROS D.V	SPAD XIII
2 hours 30 minutes	2 hours	2 hours

ARMAMENT

Most fighters of 1916 had a single machine-gun synchronised to fire through the propeller blades. The Camel's generation of scouts invariably carried two guns, which was to remain the standard fighter armament for the next 15 years.

CAMEL	2 x 7.7-mm machine-guns
ALBATROS D.V	2 x 7.92-mm machine-guns
SPAD XIII	2 x 7.7-mm machine-guns

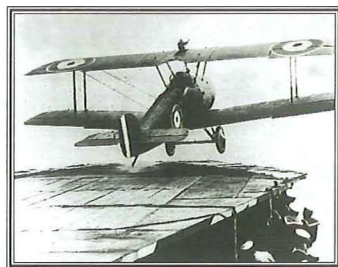
Sopwith single-seat scouts

SOPWITH PUP: Entering service in 1916, the Pup was underpowered but reasonably fast. It had a good climb rate and was very agile, and was very much a pilot's aircraft.

SOPWITH TRIPLANE: The Sopwith Triplane appeared in 1916 as a variant of the Pup. It had an extra wing for added lift and increased climb performance.

SOPWITH SNIPE: A development of the Camel with more power, more speed and more forgiving handling, the Snipe entered service in the last months of the war.

SOPWITH CAMEL



▲ Deck launch

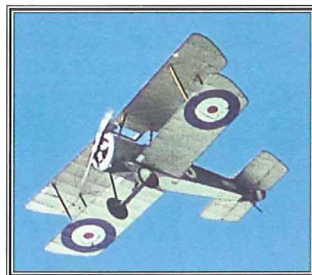
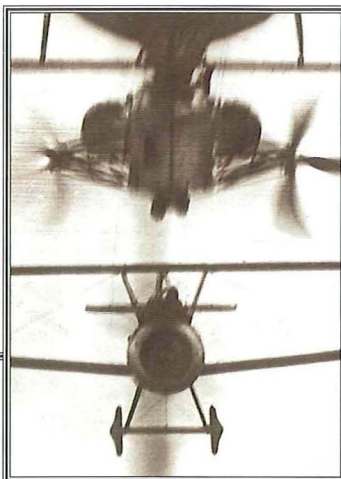
The Camel was used in carrier trials by HMS Pegasus in November 1919. The sailors watching from the lower deck obviously doubted whether the experiment would work.

▲ Supreme dogfighter

Combining a good climb rate with twin-gun firepower and immense agility, the Camel helped restore Allied fortunes in the sky after the disastrous defeats of April 1917.

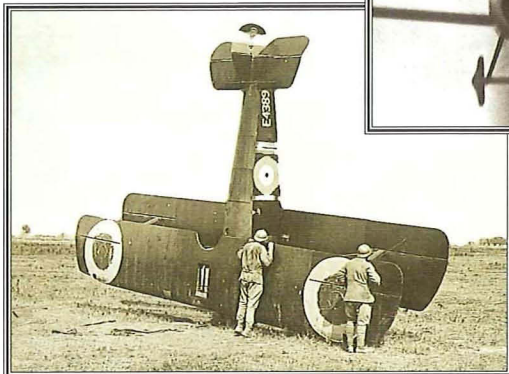
▶ Airborne take-off ▶

This Camel was dropped from the airship R.23 as part of a bizarre experiment to give airships defence against enemy fighters.



▲ Camel replica

Although 5,490 Camels were completed in the last two years of World War I, none have survived in flying condition. The only Camels to be seen in the air today are replicas.



◀ Down in no-man's land

This Camel crashed between the Canadian and German lines at Villers le Roye in August 1918. The belts of machine-gun ammunition have been dragged clear of the aircraft for use by the soldiers. Although the Camel was a tough opponent, it was also a tough aircraft to fly, and many novice pilots died in spinning incidents.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ The Camel prototype was first flown by Harry Hawker in January 1917.
- ▶ Camel production totalled 5,490, with 1,325 produced in 1917 and 4,165 in 1918.
- ▶ Sopwith Camels destroyed 1,294 enemy aircraft during World War I, more than any other aircraft of the conflict.
- ▶ The Camel pilot sat in a wicker chair without a restraining seat belt.
- ▶ The US Navy tested the Sopwith Camel as a ship-borne fighter aboard the battleships *Texas* and *Arkansas*.
- ▶ The Camel was flown by Canadian ace pilots 'Billy' Barker and Roy Brown.