



Ministry
of Defence



FOI2020/13059

E-mail: Navysec-foimailbox@mod.gov.uk



16 December 2020

Dear ,

Release of Information

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 November 2020 in which you requested the following information:

'I am in the process of building a 1:350 scale model of HMS MONMOUTH and of HMS DARING. With each kit was included a Merlin Mk2 helicopter with decals.

In the case of HMS MONMOUTH there were the letters WM near the tail rotor and the numbers 462 and 62 on the body of the aircraft. Please see attached photo of what I believe is the referenced aircraft for this model as it exactly matches the instructions in the model kit. Could you please explain the meaning of these markings, and if they are still in use or when they were dropped from use.

For HMS Daring there were simply the letters NL near the tail rotor. As in the above case, could you please explain the meaning of this marking, and if it is still in use or when it was dropped from use.

Also, could you let me know which Merlin Mk2 aircraft have been assigned to HMS MONMOUTH and to HMS DARING respectively between their commissioning and December 2018. And also what markings like the above were used on those assigned aircraft so that I can make sure I build an accurate model of each of these ships.

I would appreciate any assistance you can provide in allowing me to more accurately apply markings to these models.'

Your enquiry has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

In response to your request, I can advise you that the letters NL/WM on the tail of the Merlin MK2 correspond to deck markings from ships that the aircraft would have been attached to at some point in time. The flights have some latitude to apply marking to an aircraft to identify the ship it belongs to. In this particular instance, the letters NL refer to HMS NORTHUMBERLAND and the letters WS refer to HMS WESTMINSTER. However, you may find it useful to know that aircraft can be changed frequently, for reasons such as maintenance, which can result in occasions where old markings remain on the aircraft for some time and may be seen while it is embarked on another ship.

In respect of the numbers you mention on each of the aircraft, 462 and 62, these numbers correspond to Squadron allocated numbers that would have been applied to identify the aircraft. Flights for Type 23 and Type 45 vessels were provided by 829 Naval Air Squadron (814 NAS) until 2018 when 814 NAS assumed that task. As with the other markings you have identified, these too would change over time.

With regard to the number of Merlin MK 2 that have been assigned HMS MONMOUTH and HMS DARING, regrettably, as numerous aircraft have been embarked in both ships over the years, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list.

Under section 16 (Advice and Assistance) of the FOI Act, we can only assume that the model kits you are referring to were developed from photographs which depicted the markings in question so they would have been correct at that precise moment in time. If you would prefer to adapt the markings for the specific ships you are building models of, you may find it useful to know the marking for HMS DARING is DA and, for HMS MONMOUTH, it would be MM.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-HR@MOD.GOV.UK). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section