

429 SQUADRON 'EASY DOES IT' NOSE ART [An Interesting History]



A wartime photo of Halifax JD372's first nose art



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RCAF Halifax JD372 was flown by 429 Squadron RCAF, based at Leeming in Yorkshire. The aircraft's nose art, 'Easy Does It!', featured a 'Gremlin' riding a huge bomb which is going to destroy Nazis. The aircraft's markings were 'AL-E', the 'AL' indicating that it was a 429 Squadron bomber and the 'E' indicating that it was squadron aircraft 'E for Easy'.

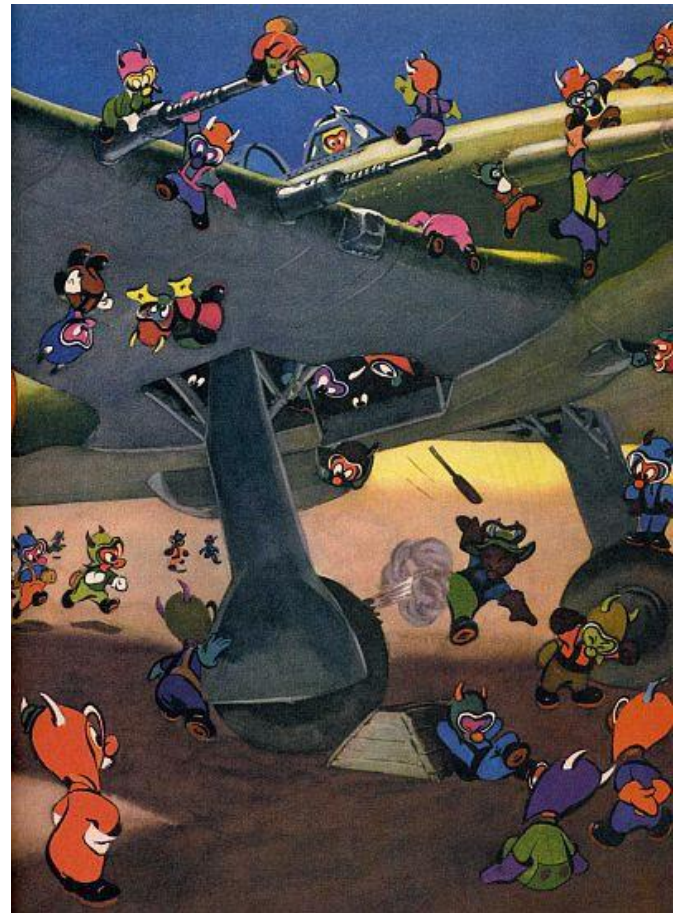
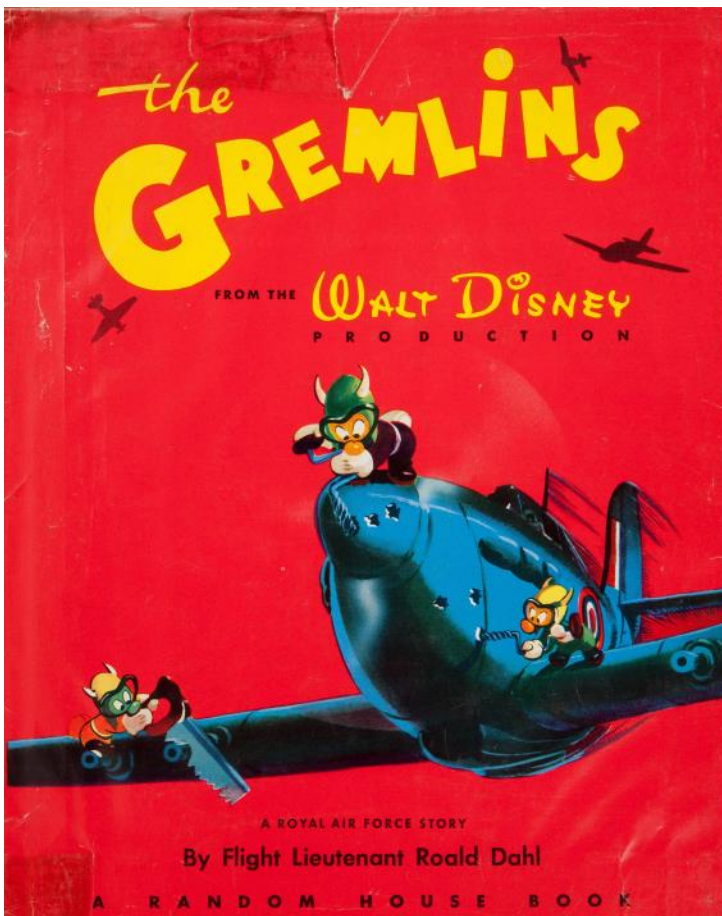
JD372 flew its first operation with 429 Squadron on 16 September 1943. On 22/23 November 1943, JD372 was struck by flak, developed engine trouble, and returned to base. During the repairs, it is thought that the nose was re-painted black and the original Gremlin nose art covered over. An unknown nose artist then repainted the nose art with name 'Easy Does It Too!'

Although the artwork in the two photos is very similar, they are clearly not the same.

There is an interesting connection of this nose art to 'gremlins', a wartime Hurricane fighter pilot who became a well-known author of children's literature, Walt Disney, and James Bond.



Nose art replica paintings by Clarence Simonsen



'The Gremlins' is a book written by RAF fighter pilot Roald Dahl and published in 1943. It was Dahl's first book and was written for Walt Disney Productions in anticipation of a feature-length, animated film that was never made. As part of the story, Dahl created a series of characters called 'Gremlins'.

During the war, Royal Air Force pilots invoked these mischievous, mythical creatures as an explanation for mechanical troubles and mishaps. In Dahl's book, the gremlins' motivation for sabotaging British aircraft is revenge for the destruction of their forest home, which was razed to make way for an aircraft factory.

The principal character in the book, Gus, has his Hurricane fighter destroyed over the English Channel by a gremlin but, as the two parachute together into the sea, Gus is able to convince the gremlin that they should join forces against their common enemy -Hitler and the Nazis. Eventually, the gremlins are re-trained by the RAF to repair rather than sabotage aircraft.

Later in the war, Dahl became involved in intelligence, working with the well-known Ian Fleming (who later published the popular *James Bond* series). Dahl supplied intelligence from Washington to Prime Minister Winston Churchill. As he later said: "My job was to try to help Winston to get on with FDR, and tell Winston what was in the old boy's mind."

Roald Dahl's books include the children's classic, 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. They have sold more than 250 million copies.