



Our Man in CALIFORNIA

The flying life of Wg Cdr James R.W. Addams

While researching his article on compressibility problems experienced with the Lockheed P-38 for *TAH23*, **MATT BEARMAN** became fascinated by the frequent mention of a British pilot based in California involved with the type's evaluation for the RAF. Digging deeper, he traced a long, distinguished career in aviation — and another angle to the RAF P-38 saga

ON A CRISP Los Angeles morning in the spring of 1941, a very English 38-year-old gentleman with a neatly trimmed moustache and tweeds lowered himself into the cockpit of a sleekly futuristic fighter, gleaming in the low Californian sun. He was going to work; across the Atlantic, his native country was engaged in a grim struggle for survival, and he was helping choose the tools.

Every choice was critical. The snappily-dressed gent casting his eye over the Lockheed P-38 Lightning's controls was Wg Cdr James R.W. Addams. The son of two bohemian acolytes of artist James McNeil Whistler, he was also future husband to a Hollywood starlet, father to another and friend to the stars. His behind-the-scenes experiences could fill a fat biography; this article, however, takes a look at his fascinating life in aviation.

OPPOSITE PAGE With his ultra-modern Ray-Ban "cheaters" offsetting his very English tweeds, Sqn Ldr James Addams (left) soaks up the sunshine in San Diego with Consolidated test pilot William B. Wheatley. **THIS PAGE, TOP** Addams at the controls of a Douglas Boston over Los Angeles. **ABOVE** Our man clammers aboard Vultee Vanguard BW209 in California in 1941.

Early days

James Ramage Whistler Addams was born in the London Borough of St Pancras on March 8, 1904. His mercurial American artist father was Clifford Isaac Addams, then slumming it in London with his artist wife, Inez, for the sake of inspiration. Inez Bates was always considered Irish by the art world — she was not. The almost guru-like James Whistler, whom she admired more than her husband, decided she was Irish because he "wouldn't have her English".

Clifford ultimately abandoned Inez, along with