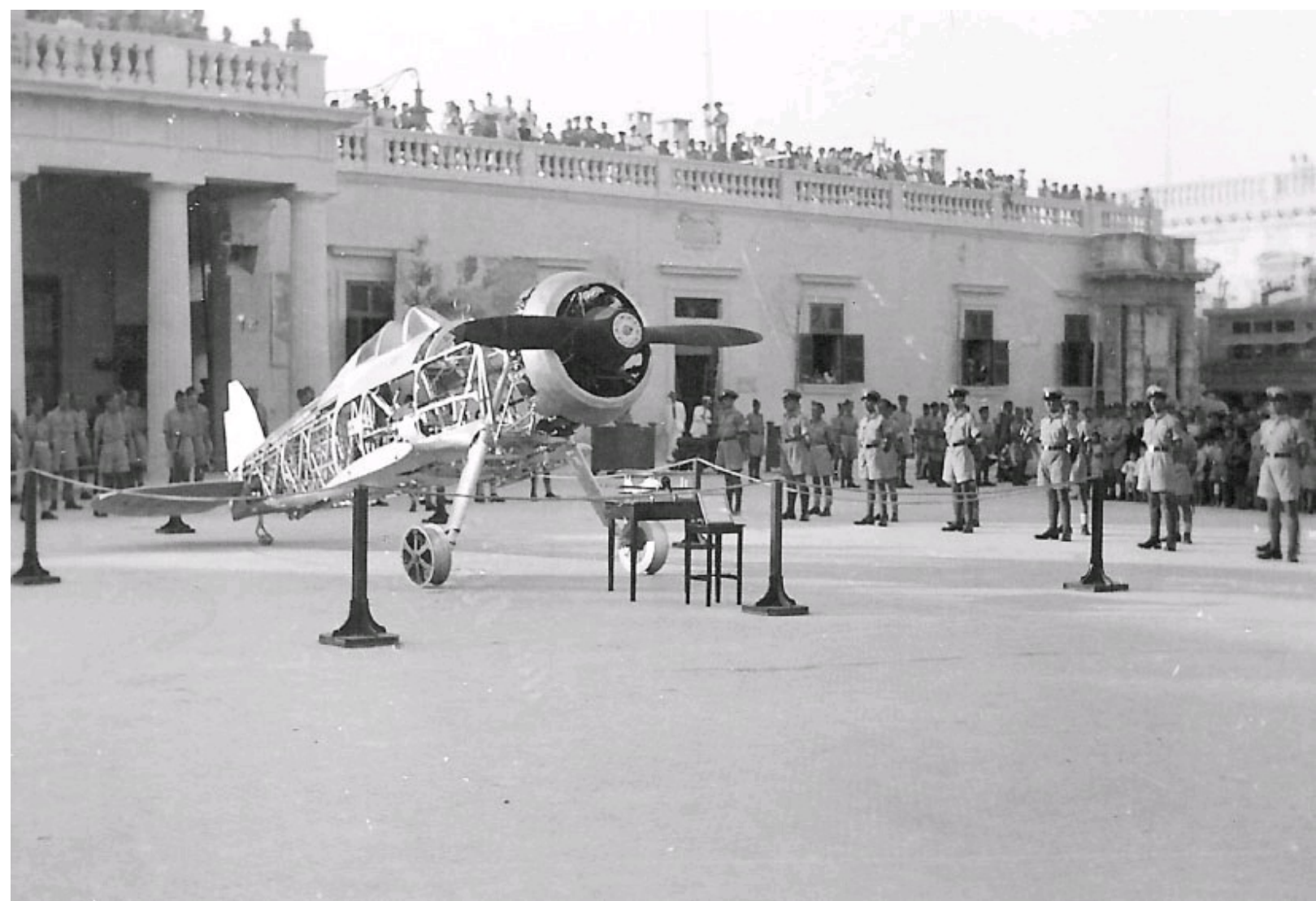


A picture of the Gloster Gladiator *Faith*, faithfully part-restored. In September 1943 *Faith*, one of the original Gladiators that had faced the Italians three years before, was retrieved from the bottom of the quarry in which she had lain. She was presented to the people of Malta by Air Marshall Sir Keith Park. *Faith* very much represented the courage and the fortitude of the servicemen and the civilians of Malta. *Faith* is, perhaps, the best-known of the three and she was fitted with an engine that was salvaged from a Bristol Blenheim. She also had a three-bladed propeller, rather than the standard two blades. *Charity* was shot down on 29 July 1940 and *Hope* was destroyed in an air raid on 4 February 1941. The fuselage of *Faith*, as seen in the picture, is now on display at the Malta War Museum in Fort St Elmo in Valletta. In recent years there has been considerable public pressure to move *Faith* from the war museum to the Malta Aviation Museum Foundation, where the intention would be to rebuild her so that she could be restored to her former glory. The feeling is that she should be seen alongside examples of the Spitfire and the Hurricane, the three aircraft that personify the fighting spirit of Malta, even in the darkest days.



Another shot of *Faith* at the official handing-over ceremony in Valletta. The quarry to which *Faith* had been consigned was alongside the Hal Far road, directly behind the RAF Officers' Mess building and probably 137 Maintenance Unit. The quarries were used to dump aircraft that had been shot down after they had been stripped of useful parts. Very little has actually been done to the remnants of *Faith* since 1974, when the RAF put a fresh skin on the fuselage and painted her in wartime colours.





Another shot of *Faith*. The Gloster Gladiator was the last biplane used by the RAF, but it was also the first that had a fully enclosed cockpit. By September 1939 there were large numbers of Gloster Gladiators being used around the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The original three Gloster Gladiators were initially four that had been packed in crates and left at the flying-boat base at Kalafrana when HMS *Glorious* had sailed north for the Norwegian campaign. The Royal Navy wanted four of them back and these were taken away to be used from the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle*. The logic therefore in using three, with the operational names, *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*, was that there would always be one in reserve that could be cannibalised. There was considerable to-ing and fro-ing about the ownership of the aircraft. The Royal Navy wanted to take them back to Egypt but they were used for the first time to intercept ten S79 Italian bombers in an attack at 06.49 on 11 June 1940. Later that day one of the Gladiators would claim the first kill of the campaign.