

**WARPAINT SERIES No. 12**

# Fairey **SWORDFISH**

BY W. A. HARRISON

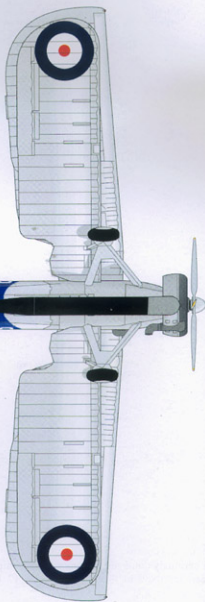
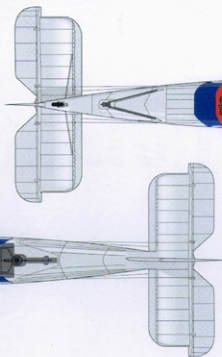
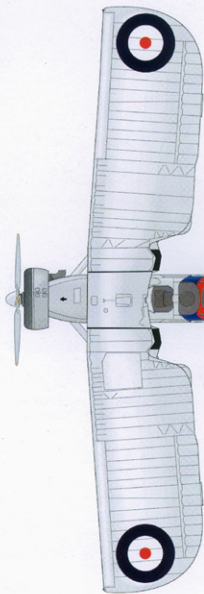
The second Swordfish W5858.AZA belonging to the Royal Navy Historic Flight seen in pre-war colours after having been rebuilt by British Aerospace, Brough and Rolls Royce, Filton from corroded remains found in Canada. (BAe photo)



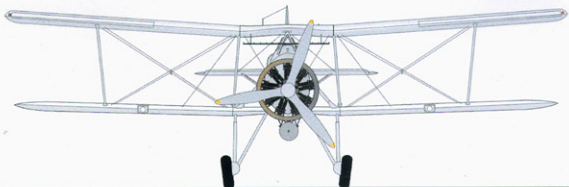


### FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk.I

L2720-680 of 821 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, on board *HMS Ark Royal*, February 1939. Overall Aluminium with Cerrux Grey on metal panels. Coloured bands identifying the ship are blue, red and blue. The fuselage stripe is also blue.



Drawings by David Howley



By W. A. Harrison

# Fairey SWORDFISH

THE Fairey Swordfish must rank as one of the most famous aircraft of World War 2, and certainly one, if not the most famous biplane in the history of aviation. Conceived as early as 1930 it was still operational when the war finished in 1945. By then 2,392 had been produced in three marks, carried out attacks on the enemy with bombs, torpedoes, mines and rocket projectiles. They had sunk or seriously damaged 30 major enemy ships, been involved in the destruction of 12 U-boats and sunk over 35,000 tons of enemy shipping. It flew in every theatre of the war, mostly from carriers, and more often than not in the most appalling weather conditions imaginable. This was due to its exceptional handling qualities at low speed, so necessary for deck landing when the flightdeck could be raising and falling 60 feet and slewing sideways at the same time! The Swordfish was constantly in action in its variety of roles and became something of a legend, so much so that it was no surprise to its crews that it outlived the aircraft designed to replace it - the Fairey Albacore.

## ORIGINS

During the 1920s and 1930s the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) operated three main types of front line aircraft, the Fleet fighter, the torpedo-bomber and the spotter-reconnaissance machine. The designs, however, left a lot to be desired, suffering from poor specifications issued by departments that knew little

The original Fairey Private Venture (PV) TSR powered by an Armstrong Siddeley Panther engine. It was never allocated a serial number or registration but the construction number F1875 was stencilled in very small numerals on the lower rear fuselage

about operating aircraft from carrier flight decks. In 1930, a naval officer, Captain Rawlings, serving on Naval liaison duty at the War Office, was convinced that the Navy needed an aeroplane with a 'sting' in its tail - something that could combine spotting duty, reconnaissance and the capability of delivering a torpedo. The Admiralty were unimpressed so he went to Faireys and talked to Mr C. R. Fairey (later Sir Richard Fairey) and Marcelle Lobelle, his chief designer. He had chosen a fortuitous time, for Fairey were engaged on a replacement design for the Fairey IIIFs of the Greek Naval Air Arm. They were also looking at designs to Specification M.1/30 which was for a two-seat torpedo-bomber and a recently issued Spec S.9/30 by the Air Ministry for a fleet torpedo-spotter-reconnaissance (TSR) aircraft. Recognising that all three had overlapping similarities Fairey submit-

One of the few wartime colour photographs of the Swordfish depicts this Mk. II HS545:B belonging to 824 Squadron and wearing all the signs of hard use over the U-boat infested waters of the Atlantic.

ted their own design in January 1933. Their three-seat Private Venture (PV) TSR was powered by a moderately supercharged Rolls Royce V-12 liquid cooled Kestrel engine. To bring the requirements into line with Naval thinking, the bomb load was increased, Dunlop wheel brakes added and the opportunity to change back and forth with wheels or floats when required. An Air Ministry decision was made to go ahead with one prototype, the most notable change they required being the replacement of the Kestrel with a 625 hp Armstrong Siddeley Panther radial engine.

Flight Lieutenant Chris Staniland, Fairey's chief test pilot at the time, took the TSR.1 on





its first flight from Fairey's Great West Aerodrome (later absorbed into Heathrow airport) on 21 March 1933. It was finished in overall silver with RAF roundels and red, white and blue stripes running the full length of the rudder. The only other marking was the aircraft construction number F.1875. (No serial being allocated to a PV aircraft) low down on the rear fuselage. It was not long after the first flight that the Air Ministry informed Fairey that they were issuing Specification S.15/33, which was to combine the previously published requirements to M.1/30 and S.9/30. Some changes were included but provided the aircraft had a British engine and was less than 7,500lbs all-up-weight the specification was pretty much as that submitted by Fairey. The weight was important because ship's catapults at that time were not capable of launching aircraft with an all-up-weight exceeding 8,000 lbs. In June of that year the Panther

was changed for a 635 hp Bristol Pegasus IIM nine-cylinder radial engine driving a two-bladed Watts wooden propeller. It had spatted wheels and an arrester hook fitted to the rear fuselage ready for carrier trials. Flight Lieutenant Staniland took it for its first flight in its revised form on 10 July 1933.

Test flying with the new machine continued apace until 11 September when Staniland had a most extraordinary escape. He was conducting spinning trials but was having difficulty to persuade the aircraft to spin. He initiated a right hand spin at 14,000 ft with the slats unlocked when suddenly the aircraft entered a flat spin with the nose well up and rotating very fast. Normal recovery actions were taken but the machine refused to respond. After trying everything he could think of going down through 12 spins Staniland elected to abandon the recovery and the aircraft. He decided to go out over

**The prototype Swordfish K4190 being run up outside the Fairey hangar at their Great West Aerodrome - now absorbed into Heathrow Airport. The last two letters of Fairey can be made out on the hangar roof. A Bristol Pegasus has replaced the Panther and seen here driving a Watts two-bladed wooden propeller. The short tailwheel oleo and original profiled rudder were both modified as a result of trials.**

the left side of the cockpit as the aircraft was spinning to the right and he expected to be thrown clear. Due to the high 'g' forces and airflow he was flung into the rear cockpit, and with great difficulty succeeded at the second attempt. The aircraft crashed at Longford, Middlesex and was written off.

A decision was taken to build a second aircraft which could incorporate numerous design changes including the letting of an extra bay into the fuselage. The longer fuselage required a four degree sweepback on the upper wings, a more powerful 690 hp Pegasus IIM3 engine was fitted and the Watts propeller was later changed to a metal three-bladed Fairey-Reed one. In its revised form Staniland took the TSR.II K4190 on its first flight on 17 April 1934. Service trials followed until February 1935 when it crashed at Gosport. A complete rebuild followed and about the time that it re-emerged in January 1936 the Air Ministry ordered three development aircraft, K5660 to K5662, to be known as the Swordfish.

An order for 86 production Swordfish was placed at the same time, and this was followed shortly afterwards by another for 131 aircraft. Production at the Fairey factory at Hayes quickly got under way and by 1940 692 had been built.

**Prototype K4190 after being converted to dual control. Fitted with a Fairey-Reed three-bladed metal propeller, the raised tail wheel oleo and re-profiled lower rudder are noticeable.**



# Fairey Swordfish camouflage and markings

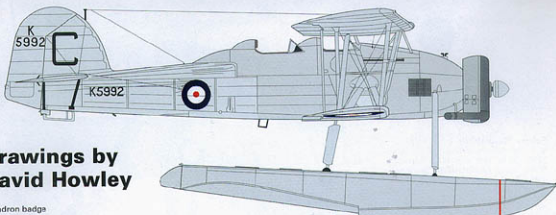
**Camouflage notes:** Four different schemes are shown depicted by: *Scheme 1* Originally Aluminium over all with Cerrux Grey on metal panels. Coloured bands indicate ship allocation. *Scheme 2* Extra Dark Sea Grey, Dark Slate Grey upper surfaces with Sky Grey lower surfaces and undersides. *Scheme 3* Modified August 1940. Sky replaced Sky Grey. Became Temperate Sea Scheme in 1941. *Scheme 4* Final scheme of Extra Dark Sea Grey, Dark Slate Grey upper surfaces with white undersides and sides.

## FAIREY SWORDFISH COLOUR KEY



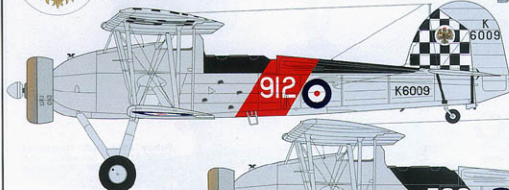
Red

**Fairey Swordfish floatplane.** K5992: C of Seaplane Training Squadron, Calshot. Seen at Empire Air Day 23 May 1936. *Scheme 1*.



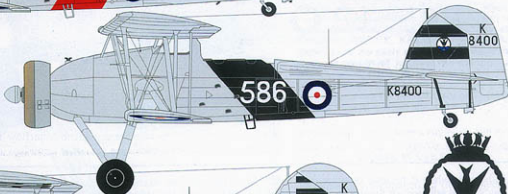
822 Squadron badge

## Drawings by David Howley

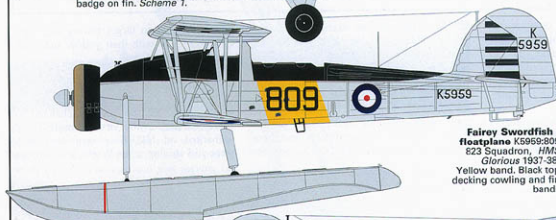


**Fairey Swordfish I** K6009:912 of 822 Squadron, HMS Furious, 1937-38. CO's aircraft. Red band, black and white checks on fin and upper wing tips. Squadron badge on fin. *Scheme 1*.

**Fairey Swordfish I** K8400:586, 813 Squadron HMS Eagle, China Station 1937-38. Bands on fuselage and fin in black. Squadron badge on fin. *Scheme 1*.



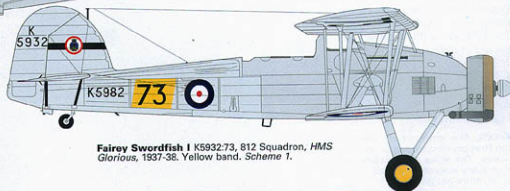
813 Squadron badge



**Fairey Swordfish I** floatplane K5959:809 823 Squadron, HMS Glorious 1937-38. Yellow band. Black top decking cowling and fin bands



812 Squadron badge

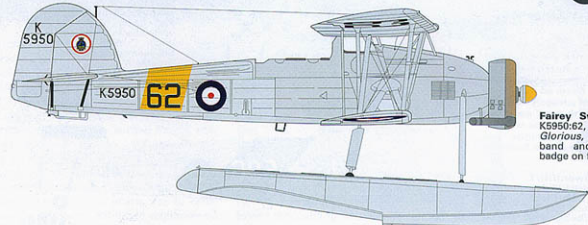
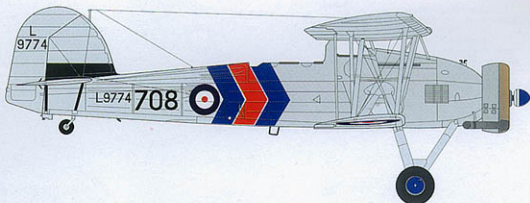


**Fairey Swordfish I** K5932:73, 812 Squadron, HMS Glorious, 1937-38. Yellow band. *Scheme 1*.



**Fairey Swordfish I** L2732-685, 821 Squadron, *HMS Courageous*, 1938. Blue band, wheel hubs and stripe. Scheme 1.

**Fairey Swordfish I** L9774-708, 814 Squadron, *HMS Ark Royal* 1938. Blue, red and blue bands, black band on fin. Blue spinner and wheel hubs. Scheme 1.



**Fairey Swordfish floatplane.** K5950-62, 812 Squadron, *HMS Glorious*, August 1938. Yellow band and spinner. Squadron badge on fin. Scheme 1.

However, when it became obvious that Fairey's could not turn out Swordfish in sufficient numbers after this date, due to Albacore, Barracuda and Firefly developments, production was transferred to a new Blackburn factory at Sherburn-in-Elmet, Yorkshire.

The first Blackburn-built Swordfish V4288, was test flown by Fairey test pilot, F. H. Dixon, on 1 December 1940. Production ceased in 1944 after 1,699 had been built, and some 600 had been cancelled. There was no problem building the basic aircraft and the only change of powerplant was from the Pegasus IIIM3, which powered the Mk.I and the first few Mk. IIs, to the more powerful 750 hp Pegasus 30 which was retained for the rest of the aircraft built.

Following 992 Mk.I Swordfish (692 by Fairey, 300 by Blackburn) came 1,080 Mk. IIs, differing only that they had a strengthened lower wing with metal skin undersurfaces for rocket projectile launching. The

K6009, the penultimate Swordfish from the first production batch built by Fairey at Hayes. The wing fold arrangement meant that more aircraft could be stored in carrier or shore hangars.

320 Mk. IIs also had strengthened wings but in addition had Mk. X Air to Surface Vessel (ASV) radar fitted in a radome between the undercarriage legs. In support of Naval air gunnery training, which had moved to Canada, over 100 Swordfish Mk. IIs were sent there where the majority were fitted with enclosed cockpits to protect crews from the Canadian winters, and these were known as Swordfish IVs. Some were

later converted to target towing and were quite colourful with their yellow and black striped under surfaces.

#### ENTERING SERVICE

In July 1936 825 Squadron exchanged its Fairey Seals for the first Swordfish and embarked on *HMS Glorious* where they were still serving when World War 2 broke





Above: Silver doped Swordfish of A Flight, Torpedo Training Unit, RAF Gosport practising formation flying in 1937. They are K8425:E, K8874:K, K8872:H and K8348:C (IWM). Left: An early production Swordfish at the moment of leaving the catapult at RAF Gosport on 2 March 1939. All TSR pilots were required to undergo such training in readiness for carrier duty or Catapult Flights aboard capital ships (Fox)

operations to full training squadron status.

#### HOME WATERS

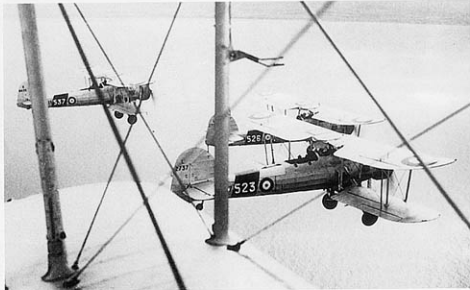
Swordfish were engaged on fleet protection duties during the first days of the war but were airborne on 14 September when U-39 positioned itself to torpedo *HMS Ark Royal*. The U-boat was sunk by the destroyer screen before it could get in a shot but later that

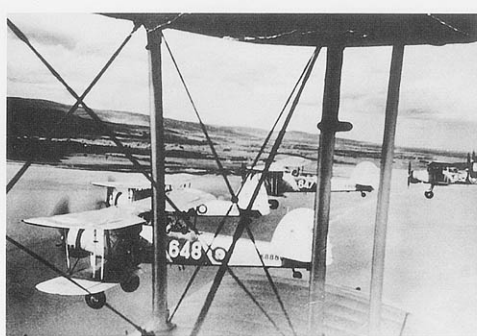


out in September 1939. By then some 13 squadrons had re-equipped with the Swordfish, which became the only torpedo-bomber in FAA service and was serving in five aircraft carriers.

*HMS Ark Royal* had 810, 814, 820 and 821, *HMS Courageous* had 811 and 822, *HMS Eagle* with 813 and 824, *HMS Glorious* with 823 and 825 and *HMS Furious* with 816 and 818 Squadrons. Swordfish floatplanes of 701 and 702 Catapult Flights were serving in battleships and cruisers. Amazingly, during the early war years some 30 front line squadrons operated the Swordfish and at least 60 second line units, ranging from single ship catapult

A pre-war shot of L2737:523, L2739:526 and K8435:537 of 810 Squadron *HMS Courageous*. Fuselage band was blue. L2739 was delivered on 7 July 1937 and was flown to Worthy Down on 2 June 1946 for disposal.





No. 820 Squadron Swordfish approaching the Scottish coast in May 1938 when they left HMS Courageous with 821 Squadron to fly to Evanton for their annual training. The nearest aircraft is K8880-648.

afternoon U-30 was detected. Skuas launched from *Ark Royal* attacked but lost two of their own number - to their own bombs! U-30 rescued the crews and made off. On 17 September Swordfish airborne from HMS *Courageous* failed to locate a U-boat which torpedoed and sank her.

#### NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN

During the Norwegian campaign Swordfish of 816 and 818 Squadrons from HMS *Furious* launched the first FAA large scale torpedo attack against two German destroyers in Trondheim Fiord. This was on 11 April 1940 but the torpedoes grounded in shallow water.

HMS *Furious* was relieved by HMS *Ark Royal* who launched 810 and 820 Squadrons with aircraft from HMS *Glorious* to bomb Vaernes aerodrome. Six Swordfish were sent to attack a railway line east of Narvik on 9 May but due to high winds the force split up with one section bombing the Nordalsheon viaduct near the Swedish border, and the other bombing a train in Hundallen railway station.

During April and May at least five Swordfish were lost in such actions around Norway. On 21 June six Swordfish were sent from Hatston in the Orkneys to attack the *Scharnhorst*.

Following the withdrawal of British forces from Norway HMS *Glorious* had loaded all the available aircraft she could carry and set off for England. Intercepted by the German capital ships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, *Glorious* was sunk but a destroyer damaged *Scharnhorst* with a torpedo. The six Swordfish from Hatston found *Scharnhorst* off the Norwegian coast and attacked from 8,000 ft. Diving through considerable flak as they tried to get inside the destroyer screen. All of their torpedoes missed and two Swordfish were shot down.

This little-known action, although on a smaller scale, was the forerunner of the now famous attack by six Swordfish on three

German capital ships during the Channel Dash when all six were shot down.

When the German attack on France and the Low Countries started on 10 May, Swordfish of 812 Squadron, on loan to RAF Coastal Command, were used at night to bomb enemy-held ports, such as Rotterdam where invasion barges were moored, mining harbours, estuaries and bombed oil tanks at Calais. Due to the nature of the raids only a crew of two was used as a large auxiliary fuel tank was installed in the rear cockpit. They operated from North Coates, Thorney Island, Detling and St. Eval until March 1941.

During this time no less than five Swordfish squadrons 812, 815, 818, 825 and 829, found themselves engaged by Coastal Command to carry out attacks on the enemy. In May, 825 Squadron in particular, found itself flying on daylight operations over France, risking intense light flak as they dive-bombed tanks and enemy vehicles in support of withdrawing Allied forces.

#### SINKING THE BISMARCK

In May 1941 the new German battleship *Bismarck* completed her sea trials and sailed for the Atlantic. The British Home Fleet sailed to intercept her strengthened by the addition of the newly commissioned carrier

HMS *Victorious*. She had been loaded with Hurricanes for Malta but these were quickly put ashore and 825 Squadron with nine Swordfish embarked together with six Fulmars of 800Z Squadron - all that was available at short notice.

*Bismarck* was found in the Denmark Strait and the nine Swordfish were launched around midnight on 24-25 May. Under extremely difficult conditions a torpedo from one of the Swordfish hit the battleship's armoured belt. HMS *Prince of Wales* had scored hits on *Bismarck* during an earlier engagement and damaged some of her fuel tanks. Contact was lost in bad weather and the Admiralty, anticipating a run for Brest to carry out repairs, moved Force H with *Ark Royal* north to cut off the escape route.

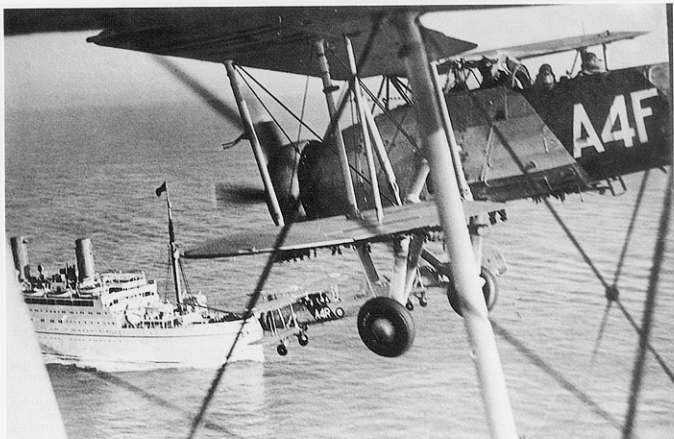
An RAF Catalina sighted the German ship on 26 May and *Ark Royal* launched 15 Swordfish in bad weather - only to mistake HMS *Sheffield* for *Bismarck* in the poor visibility and fired 11 torpedoes at her. Fortunately they all missed, exploded prematurely or were avoided, but it was a chastened lot of crews that returned to *Ark Royal*. Refuelled and re-armed 15 Swordfish took off just after nightfall in conditions of poor visibility and persistent rain. Using ASV radar, they attacked individually and scored two hits on the German ship destroying the steering gear, damaging the propellers and jamming the rudders.

*Bismarck* could only steer with great difficulty and her course was erratic. A third Swordfish strike was launched. In the meantime British destroyers continued to harry her and caused more damage. The next morning *Bismarck* was sunk by the combined heavy guns of the Home Fleet and Force H, with HMS *Dorsetshire* putting a torpedo into her just to make sure.

HMS *Victorious* and *Ark Royal* then searched for *Bismarck*'s companion, the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* and attendant destroyers. She had left *Bismarck* during the night with engine problems but managed to reach Brest.

Unusual markings for a Swordfish as K6009:912 shows. The upper fuselage was black and the chequer board on the fin and wing tips were black and white, with 912 on the lower side of the port upper wing. The fuselage band was in red. Taken at Sealand in 1938 the squadron badge is of 822 Squadron from HMS *Furious*. (IWM)





Swordfish of 820 Squadron from HMS Ark Royal diving to make a low pass and salute King George VI aboard *Empress of Australia* on 6 May 1939. The fuselage band, although not clear in this picture, consisted of blue, red and blue stripes and new codes had also been applied as seen with A4F on the fuselage side.

On 4 June, the supply ship for Bismarck, *SS Goetzenheim*, was steaming some 200 miles off the Azores when she was intercepted by Swordfish from HMS *Victorious* but before surface ships could arrive the captain had scuttled her. Swordfish from HMS *Eagle* bombed and sank the U-boat supply ship *Elbe* on 6 June.

#### IMPOSSIBLE ODDS

During World War 2 there were many brave actions in all theatres of war but one of the most courageous deeds was when Lt. Cdr. Eugene Esmonde led six Swordfish, in daylight and with no fighter escort, and took on the might of the German navy and the Luftwaffe.

The three principle ships of the Kriegsmarine were the two battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. They were in Brest harbour when Hitler demanded their presence in northern waters and ordered them to break out of Brest and reach the River Elbe. The plan was that they should slip out under cover of darkness and be almost home

Centre: All Swordfish could be converted to floatplane configuration and K8390-946 of 824 Squadron on HMS *Eagle* is ready to be hoisted out and place on the water. Right: This picture of 824 Squadron aircraft shows four different fin markings. 950 has none, 948 has one black stripe, 945 has a totally black fin and 952 has two stripes.





**Fairey Swordfish I** K5972:804  
823 Squadron, *HMS Glorious*,  
1938. Yellow band, black deck-  
ing, cowling and fin. Scheme 1.

**Fairey Swordfish I** K8449:649,  
820 Squadron, *HMS*  
*Courageous*, 17 October 1938.  
Blue band. Squadron badge on  
fin. Scheme 1.

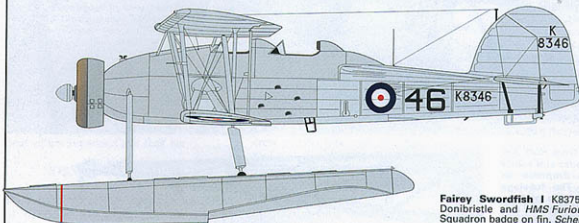


No. 4 flag on  
wing centre  
section



820 Squadron badge

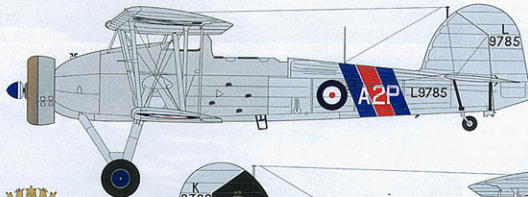
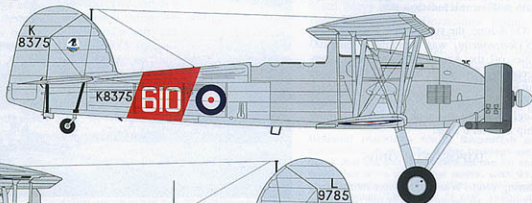
**Fairey Swordfish**  
floatplane, K8346:46,  
FPTU, Gosport, 1938.  
Scheme 1.



**Fairey Swordfish I** K8375:610, 811 Squadron,  
Donibristle and *HMS Furious* 1938. Red band.  
Squadron badge on fin. Scheme 1.



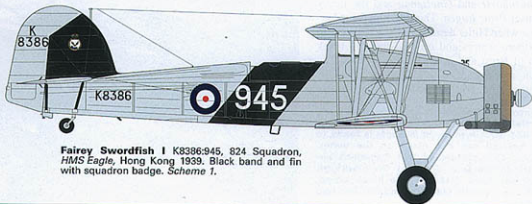
811 Squadron badge



**Fairey Swordfish I** L9785:A2P  
810 Squadron, *HMS Ark Royal*,  
1938-39. Blue, red and blue  
band. Blue spinner and wheel  
hubs. Scheme 1.



824 Squadron badge



**Fairey Swordfish I** K8386:945, 824 Squadron,  
*HMS Eagle*, Hong Kong 1939. Black band and fin  
with squadron badge. Scheme 1.

Right: Good atmosphere shot of a Swordfish being brought up to the flight deck of HMS Argus to start the day's flying. This was a training carrier on which many pilots did their first deck landings. (Fox) Centre: Swordfish L7651:B of the Torpedo Training Unit at the point of delivering a training torpedo into the Solent off Calshot. (IWM)

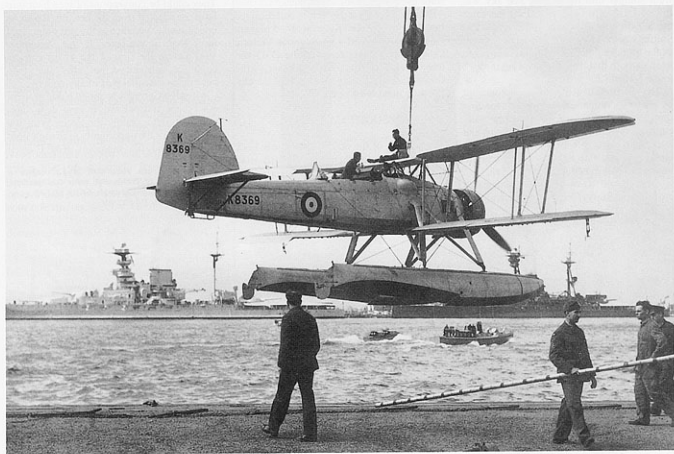
before the British knew what had happened. The British Chiefs of Staff had called a conference in January 1942 to discuss such a possibility, and accordingly ordered 825 Squadron to be based at RAF Manston, Kent.

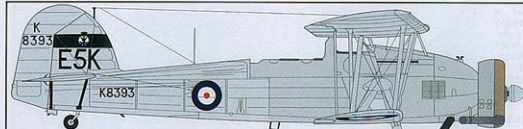
The squadron commanding officer Lt. Cdr. Esmonde had volunteered for the job but at that time the squadron was still working up and only had six Swordfish and enough crews to fly them. It was assumed that the squadron would be up to full strength by the time the Germans decided to make their move. An escort of six Spitfire squadrons was to provide fighter cover.

On the night of 11-12 February 1942 the three German warships slipped out of Brest, and escorted by six large destroyers and 34 E-boats, headed up Channel. A dawn patrol of two Spitfires discovered the breakout and informed their base. The enemy force was by now passing through the Straits of Dover and all the attacking force was alerted.

Still with only six Swordfish Esmonde elected to go and attack the enemy force, even though he had been informed that the escorting fighter squadrons were not at readiness and would be late.

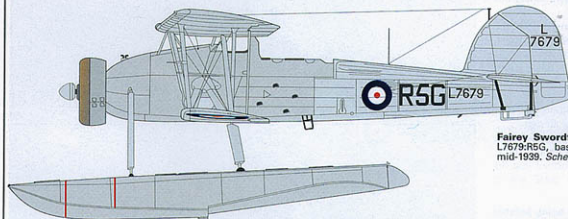
**Swordfish floatplane K8369 being hoisted off the quayside, engine ticking over, to be readied for a water take-off. All the ground crew in the picture are RAF. Not so noticeable is the target towing gear fitted in the rear cockpit with the windlass horizontal.**





**Fairey Swordfish I K8393:E5K**  
824 Squadron, HMS Eagle, 1939. September 1939, Black bands. Squadron badge on starboard fin only. Scheme 1.

**Fairey Swordfish I L9781:850**  
820 Squadron, HMS Ark Royal, 1939. Blue, red and blue bands. Blue wheel disc. Scheme 1.



**Fairey Swordfish floatplane**  
L7679:R5G, based at Portland, mid-1939. Scheme 1.

The weather was abysmal with low cloud and poor visibility. The six Swordfish sighted the enemy after 20 minutes flying and went straight into the attack. The sky was full of Luftwaffe fighters and all the ships opened fire as the aircraft approached. Ten Spitfires of No. 72 Squadron turned up out of the murk but the enemy fighters engaged them early so that they could not get through to the Swordfish.

The six aircraft were shot to ribbons, but by sheer determination and bravery, the first three got off their torpedoes before succumbing to gunfire from all of the ships and enemy fighters, most of the latter with undercarriages and flaps down to try and match the slow speed of the Swordfish.

The second wave of three managed to cross the destroyer screen but were then

hacked down. Amazingly five crew members out of the 18 survived. None of the torpedoes hit their target and the enemy warships eventually made safe waters.

Esmonde, who the day before had received the DSO from the King at Buckingham Palace was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, four officers received the DSO and one Telegraphist Air Gunner, the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, all of the others were mentioned in dispatches.

#### ESCORT CARRIERS

The concept of the escort carrier goes back to the early 1930s when the Admiralty were considering some form of augmenting the larger Fleet carrier strength in the event of war. The idea of small auxiliary carriers

capable of operating fighters and anti-submarine aircraft proved ideal and orders for ships were placed with the United States. They could be conversions of merchant ship hulls, or adapted from the keel up. Based on operational experience as the war progressed most were of the latter. It was September 1941 before the first of the escort carriers could be introduced but after that they became an essential part of any convoy.

When the Germans acquired bases in western France and Norway it gave their long-range aircraft - mainly the Focke Wulf Fw 200 Condor - the opportunity to shadow convoys beyond the range of RAF Coastal

**Swordfish from HMS Ark Royal enjoy a spell ashore at Dekhelia, near Alexandria, in April 1940. Swordfish 4A is L9729 seen together with P4137:4K.**





Captain Aston RM, CO of 833 Squadron flying Swordfish W5864-F. At the time, late 1942 or early 1943, the squadron was attached to RAF Coastal Command for anti-submarine patrols.

#### Command aircraft.

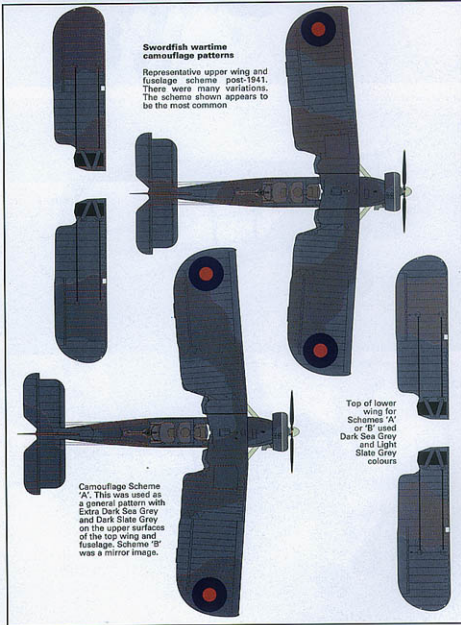
As a stop-gap measure the Admiralty converted merchant ships to have an aircraft on a ramp that could be catapulted off in the event of a Condor appearing. Initially Fulmars were used, but Hurricanes gradually took over the role, all being controlled by 804 Squadron. CAM ships sailed with 170 convoys between May 1941 and August 1943 with eight operational launches and the destruction of six enemy aircraft. Twelve CAM ships were lost in action whilst on convoy duty.

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 the defeat of the U-boat menace was given top priority. Very long range aircraft operating from the UK, Iceland and Newfoundland closed the Atlantic 'gap' where the U-boats could operate without interference. The first escort carriers, much smaller than a Fleet carrier, went into action with outstanding success. Germany actually built 1,175 U-boats of which 750 were destroyed. It should be realised that the U-boat menace was never eliminated, just subdued. They still sank 44 Allied ships in the last two months of the European war.

Those escort carriers embarking Swordfish between April 1943 and August 1944 consisted of *HMS Biter*: 16 trans-Atlantic and Gibraltar convoys between April 1943 and August 1944. 811 Squadron - 9 Swordfish (to October 1943), 811 Squadron 6 Swordfish plus 6 Wildcats and later 11 Swordfish plus 4 Wildcats. *HMS Archer*: 3 trans-Atlantic convoys plus one anti-submarine sweep. May to July 1943. 819 Squadron - 9 Swordfish. *HMS Unicorn*: 3 Gibraltar convoys May and June 1943. 818 Squadron - 9 Swordfish, 824 Squadron - 9 Swordfish.

#### Swordfish wartime camouflage patterns

Representative upper wing and fuselage scheme post-1941. There were many variations. The scheme shown appears to be the most common





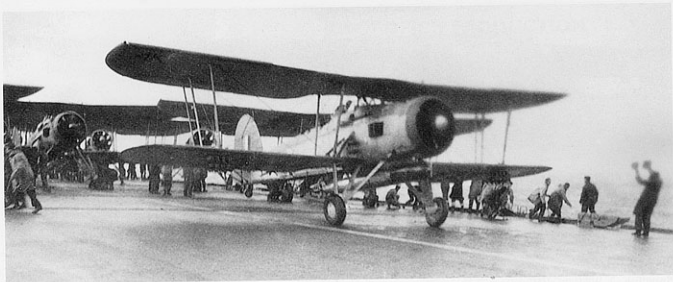
**Left:** Dual control Swordfish floatplane K5993 belonging to the Seaplane Training Squadron at Calshot. It had been delivered on 18 August by Flt Lt Money Penny and is seen here on Empire Air Day 1937. **Lower Left:** Swordfish P4206:SG of 824 Squadron, HMS Eagle being flown by Sub Lt P. Lawrence when ashore at Alexandria.

**HMS Tracker:** 12 trans-Atlantic and Gibraltar convoys September 1943 to June 1944. 816 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 6 Seafires. **HMS Fencer:** 12 trans-Atlantic and Gibraltar convoys plus two anti-submarine sweeps. October 1943 to August 1944. 842 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 6 Seafires. Later increased to 11 Swordfish and 4 Wildcats. **HMS Striker:** 9 Gibraltar convoys plus 3 anti-submarine sweeps. December 1943 to July 1944. 824 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 6 Seafires. Later changed to 12 Swordfish and 6 Wildcats. **HMS Activity:** 14 Gibraltar convoys plus one anti-submarine sweep. February to August 1944. 819 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 3 Wildcats. 833 Squadron - 3 Swordfish and 7 Wildcats. **HMS Nairana:** 13 Gibraltar convoys plus one anti-submarine sweep. February to September 1944. 835 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 6 Sea Hurricanes. **HMS Vindex:** 2 Gibraltar convoys and three anti-submarine sweeps. March to August 1944. 825 Squadron - 12 Swordfish and 6 Sea Hurricanes. **HMS Campania:** 6 Gibraltar convoys. June to August 1944. 813 Squadron - 12 Swordfish and 4 Wildcats. **HMS Battler:** 2 Gibraltar convoys as escort while en route to Mediterranean. June 1943. 835 Squadron - 9 Swordfish and 6 Sea Hurricanes. **HMS Hunter:** One Gibraltar convoy as above. August 1943. 834 Squadron - 6 Swordfish and 6 Seafires. **HMS Stalker:** One return convoy. October 1943. 833 Squadron - 6 Swordfish.

Examples of actions during this period are - 25 April 1943 when Swordfish of 811 Squadron shared in the destruction of U-203 with the destroyer *HMS Pathfinder*. 811 also shared another U-boat, U-89 with the 5th Escort Group. U-752 had the dubious distinction of being the first U-boat sunk by rocket projectiles fired by a Swordfish of 819 Squadron on 23 May 1943. 825 Squadron embarked on *HMS Vindex* and working with the 6th Escort Group was operational in the south-west approaches when, in support of the 2nd Escort Group on 15 March 1944, helped destroy U-653 at night.

As escort carriers became more available they took over much of the offensive operations in northern waters and around the Norwegian coast. The aircraft embarked on these carriers could vary to suit the type of operations they were flying but generally consisted of Swordfish and Wildcats. The number and types of operation are too numerous to list here but on 28 January 1945 Swordfish of 813 Squadron embarked in

**Centre left:** Reputed to be one of the two aircraft that hit *Bismark*, Swordfish K8376:2Q 'Queenie' is seen here operated by 810 Squadron near Jamaica in October 1941. **Left:** In November 1942 810 and 829 Squadrons, embarked in *HMS Illustrious*, took part in the Diego Suarez operation to capture Madagascar. One of those Swordfish was H5164:2F of 810 Squadron seen here near Tanga, East Africa.

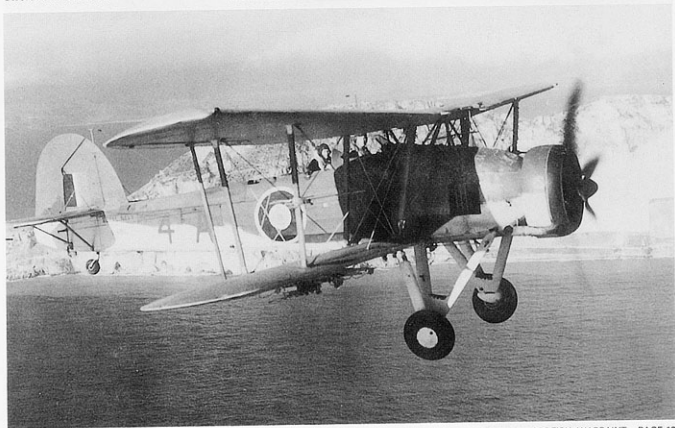


Above: Sink the *Bismarck*! Swordfish 4A of 810 Squadron from *HMS Ark Royal* is waved away to deliver a torpedo attack on the German warship on 26 May 1941. Right: One of *HMS Ark Royal*'s Swordfish returning to the carrier after the torpedo strike on *Bismarck* - the crew can be clearly seen already waving after observing two hits. (IWM)

*Campania* carried out a shipping strike on Vaagso harbour at night. Three trawlers were sunk - targets at this stage of the war being difficult to find.

A selected list of Swordfish and carriers on escort duty with Arctic convoys between February 1944 and May 1945, gives some indication of their commitment: *HMS Chaser*: 816 Squadron 11 Swordfish, 11

In 1942 813 Squadron sent a detachment, X Flight, to North Front, Gibraltar, to try and detect U-boats passing through the Straits at night. This is Sub Lt Donohue carrying out an air test near Gibraltar in Swordfish V4615:4A.





Wildcats. *HMS Activity*: 819 Squadron 3 Swordfish, 7 Wildcats. *HMS Fencer*: 842 Squadron 11 Swordfish, 9 Wildcats. *HMS Vindex*: 825 Squadron 12 Swordfish, 6 Sea Hurricanes. *HMS Striker*: 824 Squadron 12 Swordfish, 10 Wildcats. *HMS Campania*: 813 Squadron 12 Swordfish, 4 Wildcats. *HMS Vindex*: 811 Squadron, 12 Swordfish, 4 Wildcats. *HMS Nairana*: 835 Squadron 14 Swordfish, 6 Wildcats. *HMS Vindex*: 825 Squadron 12 Swordfish, 7 Wildcats. *HMS Vindex*: 813 Squadron 8 Swordfish, 12 Wildcats.

Some of these squadrons and carriers operated together more than once and as an example - at the beginning of May 1944 *Fencer's* Swordfish, operating without a fighter escort, sank three U-boats in a 48-

**Three Swordfish in early wartime markings out on a practice flight. They are from 824 Squadron normally based on board HMS Eagle. The nearest aircraft is V4649:5K.**

hour period. Thereafter the U-boats operated in waters patrolled by Russian ships.

### ARCTIC WATERS

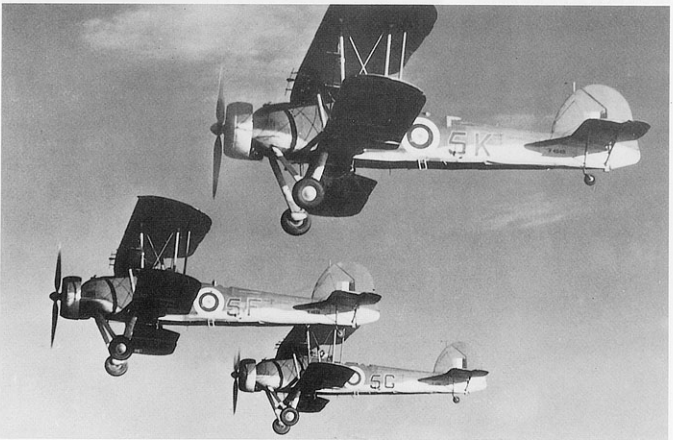
When Germany invaded Russia in June 1941 it created a new ally but also committed British forces to support them, either directly or indirectly. As a result of this it was decided to make a significant strike to 'show the flag' in support of the Russians. *Furious* and *Victorious* sailed from Scapa Flow with two cruisers and six destroyers as escort. Embarked on the two carriers were four Hurricanes, 21 Fulmars, 30 Albacores and nine Swordfish of 812 Squadron. After refuelling in Iceland the strike was launched on the afternoon of 30 July 1941 at two targets in northern Norway, Petsamo and Kirkenes. Surprise was lost and the enemy was waiting at the latter resulting in losses of 11 Albacores and three Fulmars for two

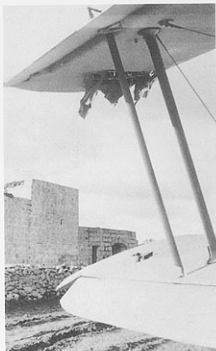
**Swordfish of 822 Squadron line up for take-off from the rain-lashed deck of HMS Furious in 1941. Aircraft from this carrier were in constant action during the Norwegian campaign.**

Messerschmitt Bf 110s, one Bf 109 and a Junkers Ju 87. The Albacores sank one 2,000 ton freighter, set another on fire and damaged installations ashore. Two Fulmars and an Albacore were lost at Petsamo for the sinking of one small steamer and damage to the jetties.

As can be seen the majority of the aircraft engaged in the strike were Albacores as the Swordfish had virtually disappeared from the Fleet carriers by the end of 1943.

Three Swordfish were embarked in *HMS Avenger* the second of the escort carriers to be built in America, to provide anti-submarine patrols for the east-bound PQ18 convoy of September 1942. During 1943 the Home Fleet embarked the following Swordfish





The crew of Swordfish V4587 of 830 Squadron based in Malta, had a lucky escape when their aircraft was intercepted by Messerschmitt Bf 109s. The wing damage is evidence of how close they came to being shot down.

squadrons for Arctic convoy work. Nine Swordfish of 825 Squadron in *HMS Furious*, six Swordfish of 816 Squadron aboard *HMS Dasher*, 13 Swordfish of 818 and 824 Squadrons aboard *HMS Unicorn*. Swordfish were embarked on Fleet carriers to provide anti-submarine patrols for short periods when strikes were launched at Tirpitz on 3 April and 17 July 1944.

## MAC SHIPS

Merchant Aircraft Carriers, or MAC-Ships as they became known, were conceived in 1941. There were two types, the converted grain carriers, with a complement of four Swordfish, and the luxury of a lift and a small hangar, whereas the converted tankers did not have a hangar but a slightly longer flight deck and embarked three Swordfish. Up to 80 per cent of the original cargo capacity could still be carried.

Normal Merchant Navy crews operated the ship while Fleet Air Arm crews operated the flying side. Swordfish were the only aircraft type embarked on these ships and were all supplied from three pool units, 836, 840 and 860 Squadrons, the latter being a Royal Netherlands Navy squadron.

By early 1944 some 92 Swordfish were on the strength of these units alone. As a show of unity many Swordfish had the 'Royal Navy' painted out and 'Merchant Navy' stencilled in place. Anything up to four MAC-Ships could be employed in a convoy depending on the importance and size of the cargo.

Swordfish flew 4,000 sorties during their time on MAC-Ships but only made 12 attacks on enemy submarines, none of which were successful. However, their continual presence made sure that the U-boats had little success either. When U-boat activity

## SWORDFISH PRODUCTION

### FAIREY-BUILT SWORDFISH

| Quantity | Contract Number | Variant | Serial Range                                                    |
|----------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | -               | TSR.I   | -                                                               |
| 1        | -               | TSR.II  | K4190                                                           |
| 3        | 402278/35       | Mk.I    | K5660-K5662                                                     |
| 86       | 402278/35       | Mk.I    | K5926-K6011                                                     |
| 104      | 466845/35       | Mk.I    | K8346-K8449                                                     |
| 27       | 466845/35       | Mk.I    | K8600-K8696                                                     |
| 150      | 534297/36       | Mk.I    | L2717-L2866                                                     |
| 62       | 672134/37       | Mk.I    | L7632-L7661, L7670-L7701                                        |
| 60       | 743308/37       | Mk.I    | L9714-L9743, L9756-L9785                                        |
| 200      | 963679/38       | Mk.I    | P2991-P4039, P4061-P4095, P4123-P4169, P4191-P4232, P4253-P4279 |

692 Swordfish Mk. I built by Fairey at the Hayes factory, Middlesex plus the TSR.I and TSR.II prototypes

### BLACKBURN-BUILT SWORDFISH

| Quantity | Contract Number | Variant | Serial Range                                                                                                                     |
|----------|-----------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 300      | B.31192/39      | Mk.I    | V4288-V4337, V4390-V4399, V4411-V4455, V4481-V4525, V4551-V4600, V4621-V4655, V4685-V4719                                        |
| 100      | B.31192/39      | Mk.I    | W5836-W5865, W5886-W5925, W5966-W5995                                                                                            |
| 100      | B.31192/39      | Mk.II   | DK670-DK719, DK743-DK792                                                                                                         |
| 400      | B.31192/39      | Mk.II   | HS154-HS196, HS208-HS231, HS254-HS299, HS312-HS346, HS361-HS410, HS424-HS471, HS484-HS519, HS533-HS561, HS579-HS625, HS637-HS678 |
| 250      | B.31192/39      | Mk.II   | LS151-L15192, LS214-L2448, LS261-L299, LS315-L3588, LS362-L5403, LS415-L5461                                                     |
| 230      | B.31192/39      | Mk.II   | NE858-NE906, NE920-NE957, NE970-NE999, NF113-NF161, NF175-NF217, NF230-NF249                                                     |

1,080 Mk. II Swordfish built at Sherburn  
400 Swordfish Mk.I/Mk. II cancelled including RL435-RL490, RL492-RL535, RL548-RL593, RL605-RL646, RL659-RL699, RL714-RL758, RL771-RL816, RL829-RL873, RL896-RL980

| Quantity | Contract Number | Variant | Serial Range                                                    |
|----------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 120      | B.31192/39      | Mk.III  | NF251-NF274, NF299-NF347, NF369-NF414                           |
| 200      | B.31192/39      | Mk.III  | NR857-NR898, NR913-NR958, NR970-NR999, NS112-NS156, NS168-NS204 |

320 Mk. III Swordfish built at Sherburn  
200 Mk. III Swordfish cancelled including NS205-NS211, NS225-NS249, NS282-NS325, NS338-NS379, NS392-NS435, NS447-NS484

Fairey built Mk.I 692  
Blackburn built Mk.I 300  
Blackburn built Mk.II 1,080 99 to Royal Canadian Navy  
Blackburn built Mk.III 320 6 to Royal Canadian Navy  
Total numbers of Swordfish built 2,392

### SERIAL NUMBERS OF SWORDFISH FOR ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

|        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mk.II  | W5856, DK698, DK699, DK752, DK774, HS168, HS171, HS196, HS209, HS220, HS260, HS261, HS263-HS266, HS268, HS275, HS288, HS320, HS322-HS325, HS336-HS337, HS339, HS343, HS381, HS383, HS396, HS397-HS405, HS455, HS464-HS471, HS484, HS501, HS503, HS507, HS509-HS515, HS517-HS519, HS533, HS534, HS553-HS555, HS560, HS582, HS663, LS193, LS229, NE926, NE927, NE929, NE937, NE938, NE940, NE952, NE953, NF136, NF161 |
| Mk.III | NR944, NR948, NR953, NS122, NS129, NS171                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

### SWORDFISH SURVIVORS

| Serial | Variant | Location        | Remarks                                                 |
|--------|---------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| W5856  | Mk.II   | Yeovilton       | Owned by Swordfish Heritage Trust. In flying condition  |
| DK791  | Mk.II   | New Zealand     | Remains in Museum of Transport and Technology, Auckland |
| HS469  | Mk.II   | Canada          | Shearwater Museum, Dartmouth, NS. In flying condition   |
| HS498  | Mk.II   | Canada          | Karl Enholder                                           |
| HS503  | Mk.II   | Cosford         | Aerospace Museum                                        |
| HS564  | Mk.II   | Canada          | Bob Spence. In flying condition                         |
| HS618  | Mk.II   | Yeovilton       | In FAA Museum                                           |
| LS326  | Mk.II   | Yeovilton       | Owned by Swordfish Heritage trust. In flying condition  |
| NF370  | Mk.III  | Lambeth, London | Owned by Imperial War Museum                            |
| NF369  | Mk.III  | Canada          | Owned by Swordfish Heritage Trust                       |
| NS122  | Mk.III  | Canada          | National Museum of Canada, Ottawa                       |

There may be the remains of a few more Swordfish airframes languishing in Canada.

At least two Swordfish were bought by public subscription during World War 2. One was named 'Wendy Leigh of Hungarton' and the other 'Tangerine of Loughborough'

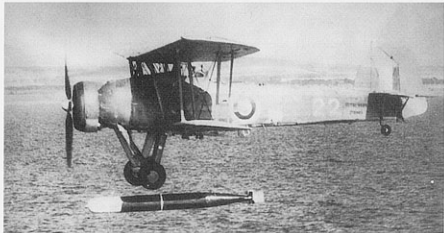
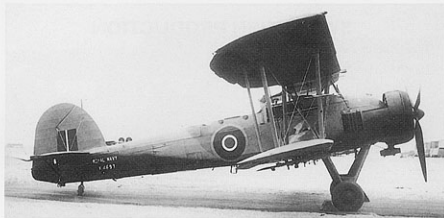
declined the MAC-Ships were used to ferry aircraft from America. The last operational flight of a Swordfish was, appropriately, made on 28 June 1945 from MAC-Ship *Empire Mackay*.

## IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Before the outbreak of World War 2 the Fleet Air Arm took advantage of the good

weather in the south of France and had 767 Training Squadron based there with Swordfish. Deck landing training was provided by the old training carrier *HMS Argus*. When Italy entered the war it placed them in a tenuous position so on 14 June 1940 they attacked Genoa with bombs borrowed from the French.

These Swordfish carried on to Malta where they landed with great difficulty, avoiding



After dropping a torpedo at 1,000 yards it took 40-50 seconds to run to the target. This Swordfish, from a torpedo training unit, drops a practice torpedo set to run at a depth that allowed it to pass beneath the target for subsequent recovery. (FAAM-Sfish-29)

obstacles placed on the airfield to stop airborne landings! Half of the squadron remained on Malta forming 830 Squadron, which, over the next two years, covered itself in glory, sinking an average of 50,000 tons of enemy shipping each month for nine months.

Joined by Albacores in 1942, the squadron sank 30 ships in 36 night attacks using 67 torpedoes and only losing three aircraft.

On 23 June 1940 HMS *Ark Royal* with 810, 818 and 820 Squadrons on board, arrived in Gibraltar to join Force H. This was a task force sent to invite the French Fleet, based at Oran or Mers-el-Kebir, to either join the Allies, be interned, or suffer the consequences. The French Fleet consisted of two new battle-cruisers, the *Strasbourg* and *Dunkerque*, two battleships, several light cruisers, various destroyers and submarines. The concern of the British was that with the fall of France some of the Vichy French might want to continue the fight, and if this was the case, to what purpose they might use their Fleet. The British government invited the French to throw in their lot with the Allies.

But the French declined and on 3 July

On 1 May 1942 837 Squadron formed at Palisades, Jamaica, with four Swordfish as a TBR squadron for duty aboard HMS *Dasher* on its delivery journey across the Atlantic. W5585A is seen flying along the Jamaican coast before leaving for New York and the start of a convoy.

PAGE 16 FAIREY SWORDFISH WARPAINT

Force H opened fire on the French Fleet. Swordfish from *Ark Royal* spotting the fall of shot while five others mined the entrance to Mers-el-Kebir harbour.

The battle-cruiser *Strasbourg* tried to make a run for it but a bombing attack by six Swordfish failed to score a hit and a second strike using torpedoes also failed to score a hit.

The *Dunkerque* although aground was not out of action, and two squadrons of Swordfish armed with torpedoes dived from 7,000 ft to score six hits. Meanwhile another carrier HMS *Hermes*, had been part of a small force shadowing the newly-commissioned French battleship *Richelieu*. On 8 July six Swordfish of 814 Squadron attacked

Black undersurfaces were unusual for Swordfish, except for those operating at night over the Western Desert. This picture was taken of V4697 at Fayid, Egypt, on 16 November 1942. (H.Levy)

her with torpedoes, having to make their run through two lines of merchant ships to cause damage that put her out of action for over a year.

Also on this day 813 and 824 Squadrons, operating from HMS *Eagle* had two inconclusive actions against the French Fleet off Calabria. On 10 July 813 Squadron made a dusk attack on Augusta harbour damaging a destroyer and tanker. 824 Squadron moved ashore to Egypt and in the next few weeks sank two enemy destroyers, three submarines, a depot ship and bombed Tobruk.

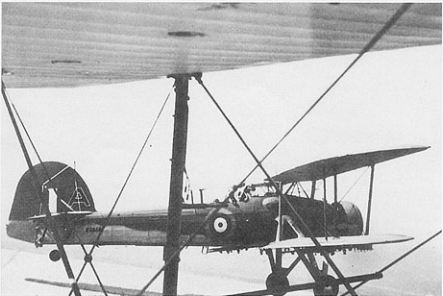
Twelve Swordfish from *Ark Royal*, still operating in the Mediterranean, took off on 9 August to attack Cagliari on Sardinia. The aerodrome at Elmos was attacked with nine aircraft bombing and destroying four hangars, setting buildings on fire and destroying four aircraft on the ground. Three other Swordfish mined the harbour.

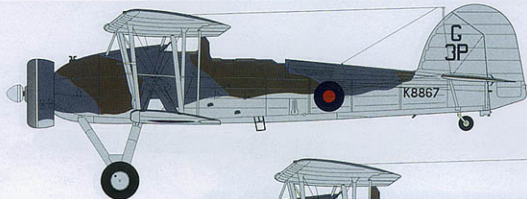
In early August HMS *Eagle* went into Alexandria harbour and 813 and 824 Squadrons went ashore. The Air Officer Commanding the Western Desert, Air Commodore R. Collishaw, immediately put the two squadrons to good use. He needed some torpedo carrying aircraft to deal with enemy shipping off the Libyan coast as General Wavell began his offensive against the Italians.

On 21 August in one of the first operations to support this, a small force of three Swordfish from 813 Squadron led by Captain Patch RM, and acting on a sighting report by a RAF Blenheim, found and attacked enemy shipping in Bomba harbour. In a matter of a few minutes these three venerable aircraft had sunk three ships and a submarine for the expenditure of three torpedoes and at no loss to themselves.

During the night of 2-3 September Swordfish from *Ark Royal* led by Lt. Cdr M. Johnstone, made two attacks on Cagliari and went back again on 9 November.

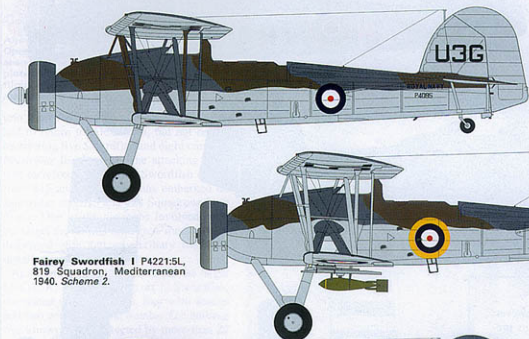
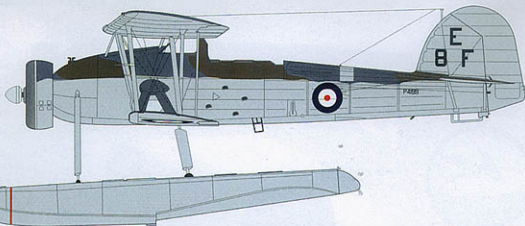
Fifteen Swordfish from HMS *Illustrious* attacked enemy ships in Benghazi on 17 September sinking two Italian destroyers





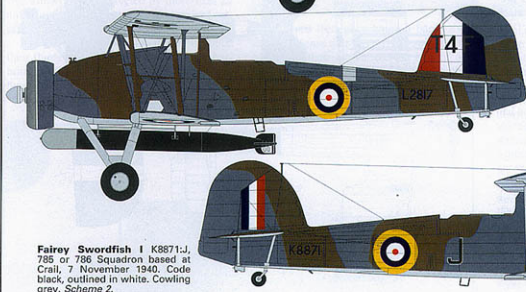
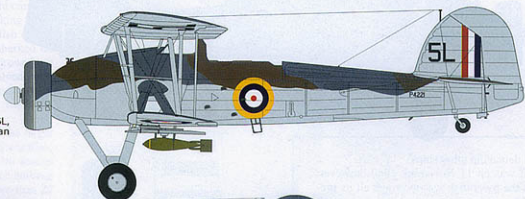
**Fairey Swordfish I** K8867-G3P,  
812 Squadron, HMS Glorious,  
1939. Note Type 'B' roundels in  
six positions. Scheme 2.

**Fairey Swordfish floatplane**  
P4199-E8F, 702 Squadron, HMS  
Resolution December 1939.  
Scheme 2.



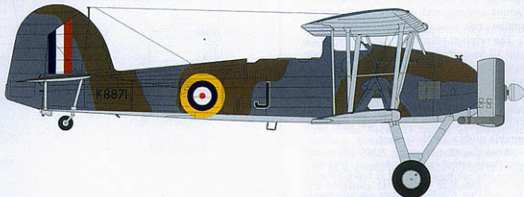
**Fairey Swordfish I** P4095-U3G  
815 Squadron, HMS Furious,  
1940. Scheme 2.

**Fairey Swordfish I** P4221-5L,  
819 Squadron, Mediterranean  
1940. Scheme 2.

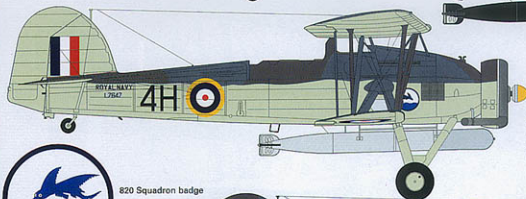
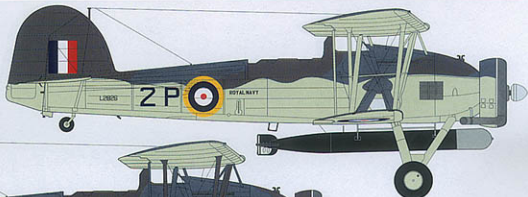


**Fairey Swordfish I** L2817-T4F,  
767 Squadron, Kalafrana, Malta,  
September 1940. Scheme 2.

**Fairey Swordfish I** K8871-J,  
785 or 786 Squadron based at  
Crail, 7 November 1940. Code  
black, outlined in white. Cowling  
grey. Scheme 2.



**Fairey Swordfish I** L2826:2P, 810 Squadron, 1941. 'Royal Navy' appears forward of fuselage roundel. Blue codes. Scheme 3.

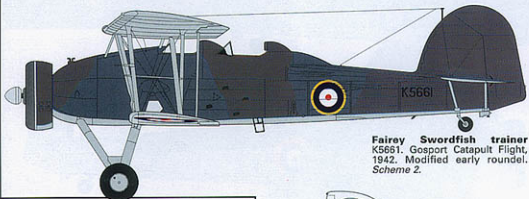
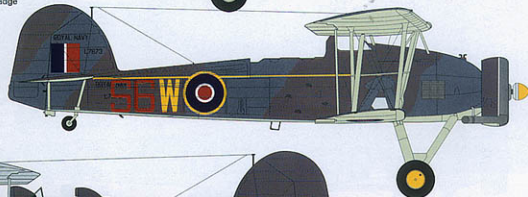


**Fairey Swordfish I** L7647:4H, 820 Squadron, HMS Ark Royal, 1941. 820 Squadron badge both sides of nose. Black codes and yellow spinner. Scheme 3



820 Squadron badge

**Fairey Swordfish I** L7673:S6W, 744 Squadron, 1941. 'Royal Navy' and serial repeated on fin. Yellow spinner and wheel hubs. Yellow stripe on fuselage. Scheme 3.



**Fairey Swordfish trainer** K5661, Gosport Catapult Flight, 1942. Modified early roundel. Scheme 2.

and damaging other ships.

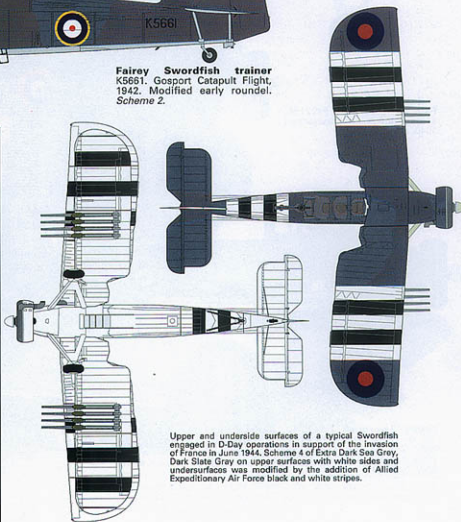
It was on 11 November 1940, however, that the Swordfish was to crown all its previous achievements with the classic attack on the Italian Fleet in Taranto harbour.

## TARANTO

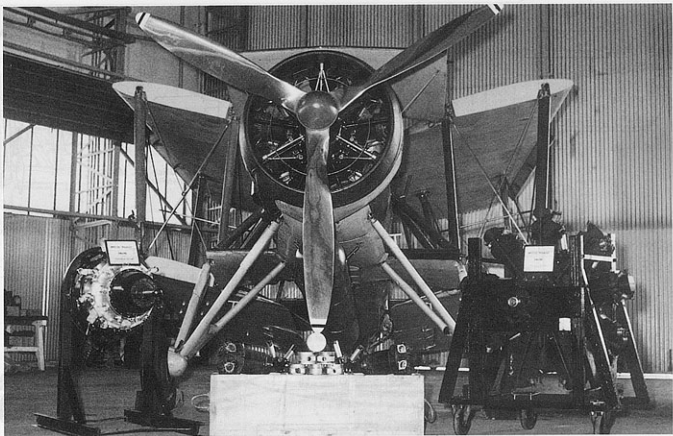
As early as 1938 the Commander-in-Chief of the British Mediterranean Fleet had foreseen the possibility of such an attack and had drawn up plans in case Italy entered the war on the side of Germany. Preliminary reconnaissance of Taranto showed six battleships, various cruisers and destroyers plus many smaller craft.

The original plan was to make the attack with 30 Swordfish on 21 October, Trafalgar Day. Unfortunately, a few days before this a gunner working on one of the aircraft caused a spark and within minutes not one Swordfish was fit to fly. The aircraft were repaired and the raid set for the next most suitable night - 11 November.

At 6 pm that evening HMS *Illustrious* sailed to the fly-off position escorted by four cruisers and four destroyers. It had been intended that *Eagle* with her aircraft would

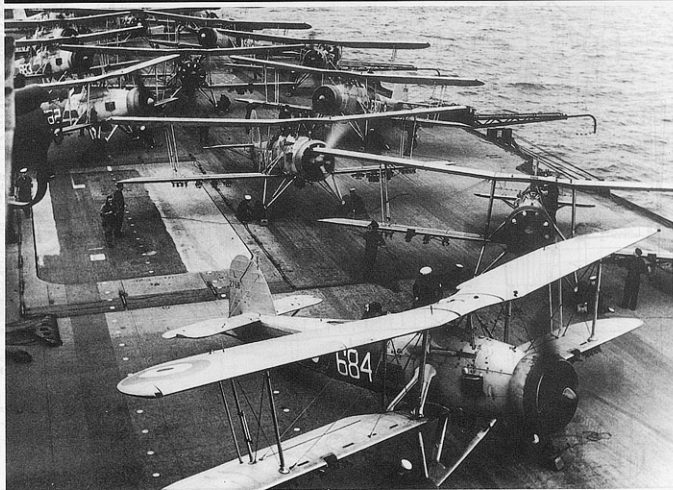


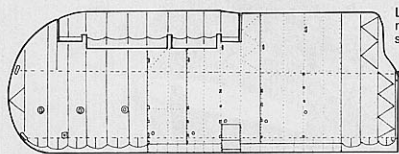
Upper and underside surfaces of a typical Swordfish engaged in D-Day operations in support of the invasion of France in June 1944. Scheme 4 of Extra Dark Sea Grey, Dark Slate Gray on upper surfaces with white sides and undersurfaces was modified by the addition of Allied Expeditionary Air Force black and white stripes.



## Fairey Swordfish 1:72nd scale plans

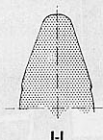
Above: The Fleet Air Arm's static display Swordfish II HS618. Below: Swordfish of 821 Squadron taxi forward for take off from HMS Courageous in 1938.



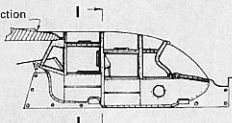


Lower surface of bottom mainplane showing metal skinning portion on Mk. II

Metal skinning

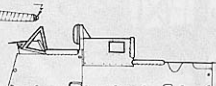


Centre Section



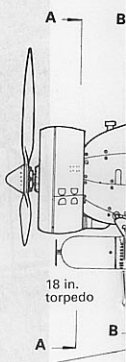
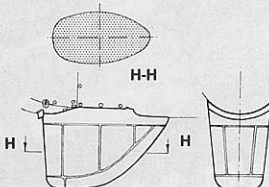
**Fairey Swordfish Mk. IV**  
Detail of cockpit canopy

Centre section

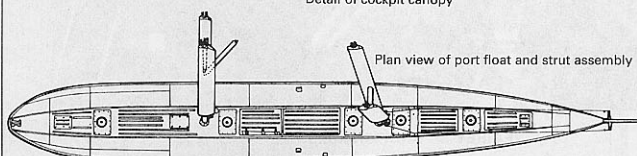


**Fairey Swordfish Mk. III**  
Cockpit detail

**Fairey Swordfish AS. Mk.III**  
ASV Mk. X installation



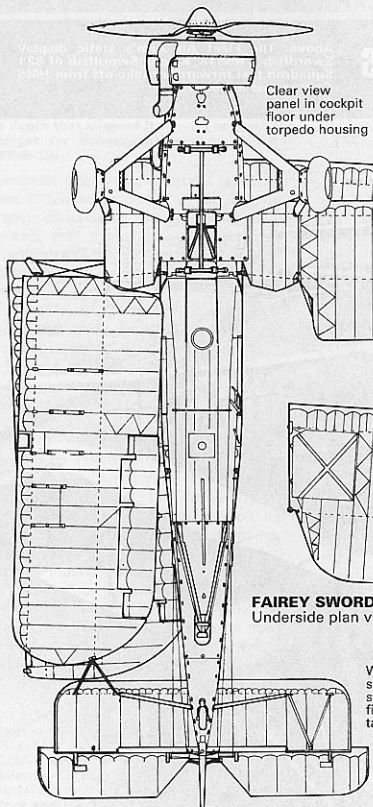
18 in.  
torpedo



Plan view of port float and strut assembly

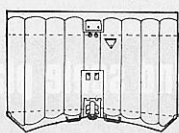
# Fairey SWORDFISH

Drawings by Ian Huntley

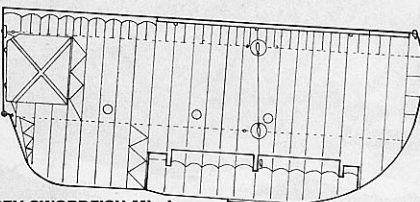


**FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk. I**  
Underside plan view

Clear view  
panel in cockpit  
floor under  
torpedo housing

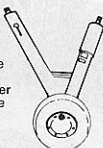


Undersurface of centre section

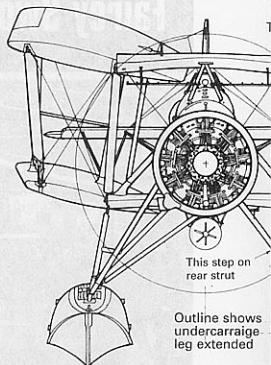


Undersurface of upper mainplane

Wing  
stowage  
strut  
fits under  
tailplane

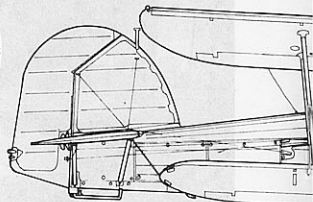


Limit of  
undercarriage  
leg extension  
when aircraft  
is airborne



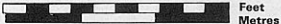
This step on  
rear strut

Outline shows  
undercarriage-  
leg extended

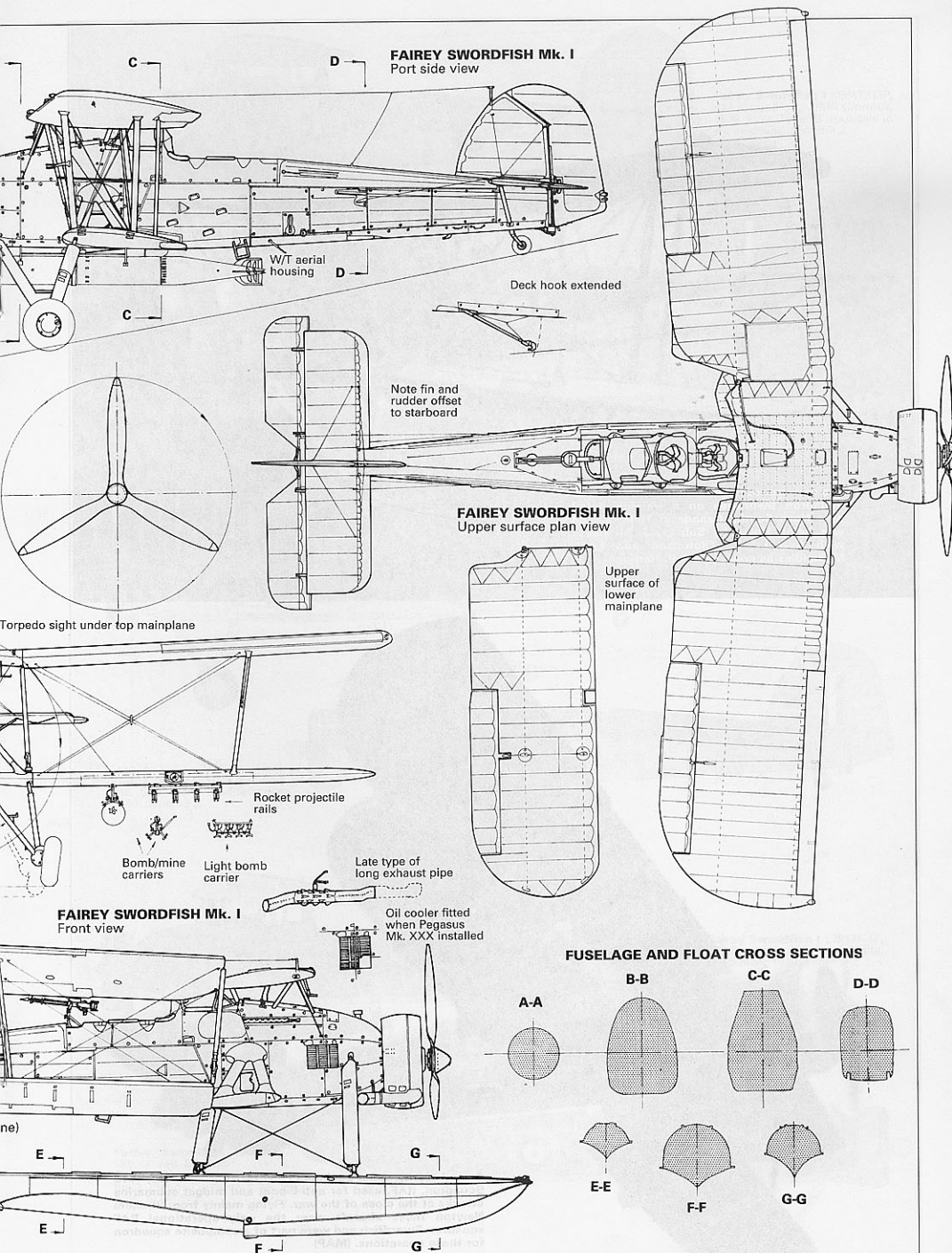


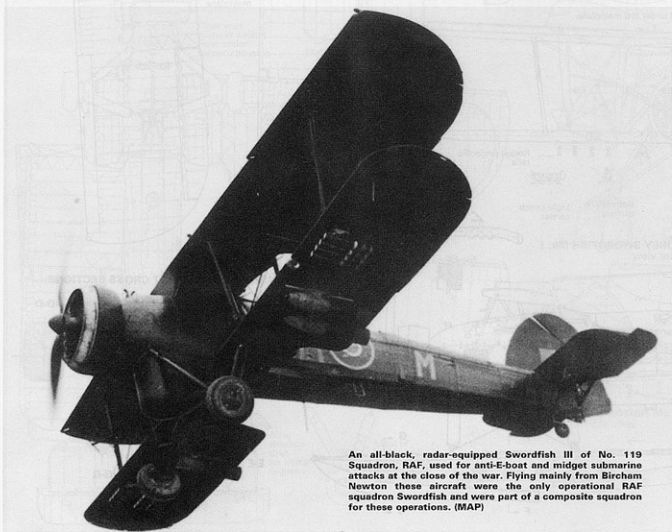
**FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk. I** (floatplan)  
Starboard side view

1:72nd SCALE



Feet  
Metres







Above and right: MAC ship *Amastra* at sea. Operating *Swordfish*, two of which can be seen on the rear deck (above). These two pictures illustrate the small size of the flight deck taken from both the take-off and landing positions.

join *Illustrious* but she developed a fault and had to return to Alexandria, but not before transferring five *Swordfish* and eight crews to *Illustrious* for the raid. The attacking force was therefore made up of *Swordfish* drawn from 815 and 819 Squadrons embarked on *Illustrious* and 813 and 824 Squadrons from *Eagle*. Due to the distances involved from the target the normal third crew member was dispensed with and an auxiliary fuel tank installed in the rear cockpit.

At a point some 180 miles from the target Lt. Cdr. K. Williamson led off 12 *Swordfish*, six armed with torpedoes, four with bombs and two with flares and bombs. The harbour was known to be protected by more than 22 anti-aircraft gun positions, balloons and torpedo netting.

The flare droppers arrived and dropped their flares along the eastern edge of the harbour illuminating the target, and then bombed an oil storage depot. The torpedo



force dived through a balloon barrage and despite intense anti-aircraft fire succeeded in hitting all their targets for the loss of only one aircraft - the force leader. The bombing aircraft attacked the other ships at mast top

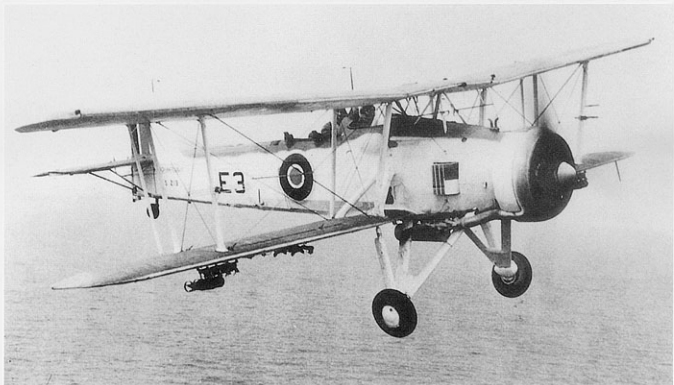
level and shore installations including a sea-plane base. The first strike was over after 23 minutes.

Meanwhile, a second force had taken off led by Lt. Cdr. J. W. Hale, consisting of nine *Swordfish*, five with torpedoes, two with bombs and two with flares and bombs. The second wave arrived at midnight to horrific flak. Every gun in the Italian Fleet and shore batteries was firing but amazingly only one aircraft was lost. All of the targets were hit.

Air reconnaissance the next day revealed three battleships severely damaged, two of them under water. A cruiser and two

The Royal Netherlands Navy operated *Swordfish* from mid-1943 until the end of the year. They used 860 Squadron and also operated two flights with 836 Squadron. They were normally based at Maydown, Northern Ireland or embarked on MAC-Ships *Macoma* or *Gadila*. This *Swordfish* has just landed on the latter and with wings folded is being taxied forward whilst the batsman is already signalling to the next aircraft to land on.





**Swordfish LS219:E3 of 836 Squadron on patrol from the MAC-Ship *Amastra*. The style of Flight numbers and letters could vary between Flights. This one has Merchant Navy stencilled in place of Royal Navy**

destroyers had been hit and two auxiliary vessels sunk with bomb damage to the sea-plane base and oil storage tanks. A second strike the following night had to be called off due to bad weather.

This one action completely vindicated the use of aircraft operating from aircraft carriers. It was a magnificent victory, made with brave men flying obsolete biplanes against tremendous odds which in one night completely changed the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean.

On the morning of 27 November, the Italian Navy in a show of force and consisting of two battleships, six cruisers and 16 destroyers were attacked by 11 Swordfish resulting in hits on one of the battleships. A second force of nine Swordfish was launched but the results were inconclusive.

Towards the end of 1940 Swordfish from *Illustrious* bombed airfields in the Aegean and Dodecanese. In December they bombed Rhodes and attacked a convoy off Sfax at night with two merchant ships sunk.

On 2 February 1941 Swordfish from *Ark Royal* set off to carry out a 'Dambusters' raid on the Tirso dam in Sardinia. Icing conditions forced one aircraft to return to the ship, two jettisoned their torpedoes due to heavy icing and one was shot down. The other four launched their torpedoes at the dam wall but no damage was observed.

Fourteen Swordfish from *Ark Royal* took off on 11 February and eleven of them

**Centre left: Evidence that some Swordfish 'belonged' to the Merchant Navy is shown here on the rear fuselage of HS380:A from 836 Squadron. Left: Two Swordfish of 'B' Flight, 836 Squadron, LS434:B3 and LS225:B4, warm up at RNAS Dartmouth, Nova Scotia after disembarking from MAC-Ship *Macmahon* in January 1945.**

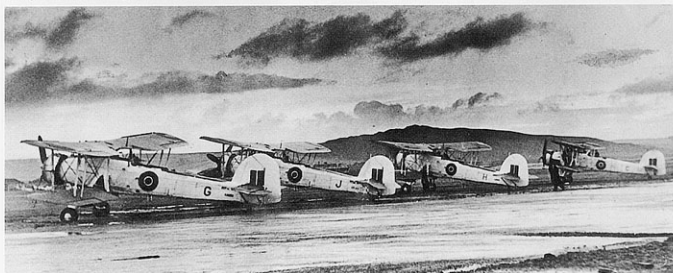


Above: A Swordfish II of No. 1 Naval Air Gunnery School with enclosed cockpits flying near Dartmouth, Nova Scotia in 1944. (Public Archives of Canada) Right: Swordfish NF155:B2 of 836 Squadron over Nova Scotia after disembarking from *HMS Adula* Looking very aggressive with rocket rails and bombs it is one of the few Swordfish to have a personal emblem on the fuselage, in this case a baker's head.

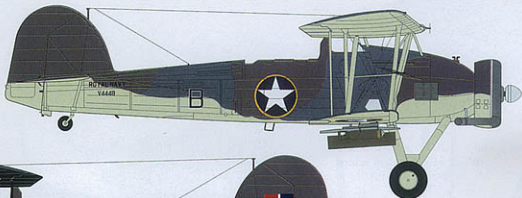
bombed the oil refinery at Azienda. Three aircraft were sent to spot for the Fleet's bombardment of Genoa and four were despatched to mine the entrance to La Spezia harbour.

815 Squadron was detached to Paramythia in Greece on 11 March and with six Swordfish carried out seven attacks on Durazzo harbour. Twelve sorties were made against Velona harbour and despite shallow

Four Swordfish of 860 Squadron, R. Neth. Navy at Maydown, Northern Ireland. Later on individual letters would be preceded by the Flight letter, eg S1, and a small Dutch triangle added to the top of the rudder.



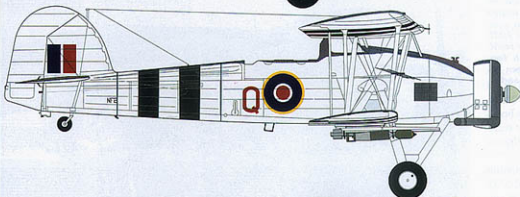
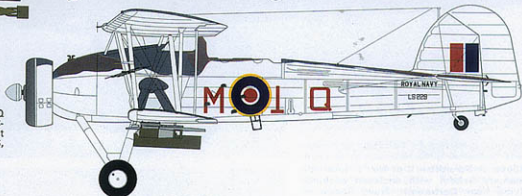
**Fairey Swordfish I** V4448:B, 833 Squadron, Operation Torch, November 1942. 'B' in black outlined white. US Navy type roundels in all six positions. Scheme 3.



**Fairey Swordfish II** HS180:S6B 815 Squadron, Western Desert 1943. Modified with black under-surfaces. Red codes, white 'Royal Navy' and serial. Scheme 3.

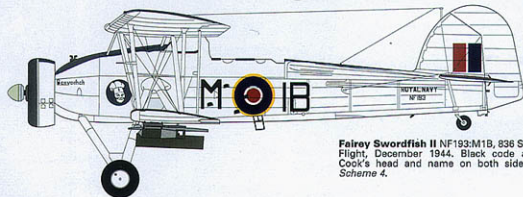
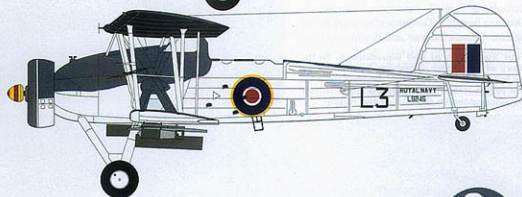


**Fairey Swordfish II** LS229:M1Q 836 Squadron, Q Flight, on MAC-Ships or shore-based at Maydown or Dartmouth NS, 1944. Red codes. Scheme 4.



**Fairey Swordfish II** NF27 (full serial not known), 816 Squadron, July 1944. Black and white ARAF bands on all surfaces. Red code and Sky spinner. Scheme 4.

**Fairey Swordfish II** LS245:L3 836 Squadron, L Flight, 20 September 1944. Flown by Lt. J. McAleese. All black under top wing to overcome sea reflections. Yellow spinner with red bands. Scheme 4.



**Fairey Swordfish II** NF193:M1B, 836 Squadron, B Flight, December 1944. Black code and name. Cook's head and name on both sides of nose. Scheme 4.



Cook's head badge on NF193

**Right:** Swordfish LS245:L3 of 836 Squadron I Flight, showing the unusual all-black under-top wing surfaces which were used to avoid reflection from other aircraft parts and the sea. (via J. P. Harrison)

**Centre right:** An all-black Swordfish of No. 119 Squadron, RAF, at the point of touchdown at Bircham Newton. Their role for the last few months of the war was anti-E-boat and midget submarine patrols.

water and night fighters managed hits with five torpedoes plus two hits on other ships.

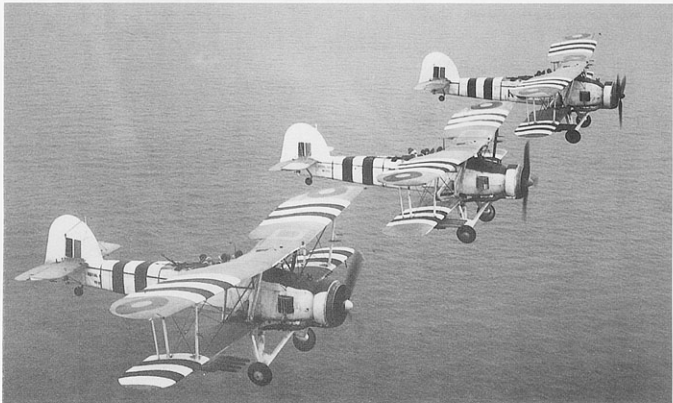
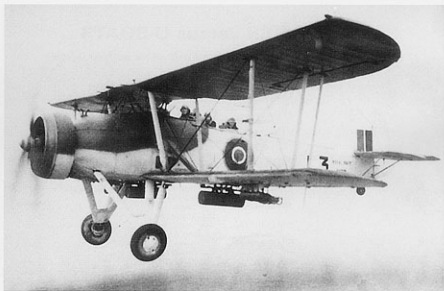
Swordfish of 815 Squadron scored again on 28 March during the Battle of Cape Matapan by disabling the Italian cruiser *Pola*. The Italian cruisers *Zara* and *Fiume* went to assist *Pola* but all three were sunk in the night action that followed.

With Greece overrun by the Germans the surviving Swordfish moved to Crete where they continued to operate until they finally withdrew with two aircraft remaining in April. 815, now operating from Cyprus, struck Vichy shipping and shore targets in Syria. It was during May that 814 Squadron were in action helping the RAF put down the Iraqi rebellion. From 4 to 16 May their Swordfish made 10 dive bombing attacks on barracks, troop concentrations, bridges, petrol and oil installations.

#### AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

A year later *HMS Illustrious* was operating off the east coast of Africa. In May Swordfish from 829 Squadron sank the submarine *Bevezieres* with depth charges and another submarine *Le Heros* was sunk on 8 May. This was part of Operation Ironclad, the plan to occupy Diego Suarez on the

**Below:** Three Swordfish of 816 Squadron in July 1944. The squadron was on loan to RAF Coastal Command to carry out operations over the Channel before and during the Normandy landings, hence the invasion stripes. (IWM)



## SWORDFISH versus U-BOATS

U-boats sunk by Swordfish or shared with other surface vessels

| No. | Name or number   | Date              | Remarks                                                                                                                                                |
|-----|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | U-64             | 13 April 1940     | Swordfish floatplane from HMS <i>Warspite</i>                                                                                                          |
| 2   | U-451            | 21 December 1941  | Swordfish from 812 Sqn based ashore at Gibraltar - sunk off Tangier                                                                                    |
| 3   | <i>Beveziers</i> | 5 May 1942        | Swordfish of 829 Sqn from <i>Illustrious</i> during Diego Suarez operations. Vichy French submarine.                                                   |
| 4   | <i>Le Heros</i>  | 6 May 1942        | Swordfish of 829 Sqn from <i>Illustrious</i> during Diego Suarez operations. Vichy French submarine.                                                   |
| 5   | U-752            | 21 November 1942  | Swordfish from 819 Sqn from <i>Archer</i> during Atlantic convoy duty.                                                                                 |
| 6   | U-666            | 10 February 1944  | Swordfish of 816 Sqn from <i>Fencer</i> during Atlantic convoy duty.                                                                                   |
| 7   | U-366            | 5 March 1944      | Swordfish of 816 Sqn from <i>Chaser</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                          |
| 8   | U-973            | 6 March 1944      | Swordfish of 816 Sqn from <i>Chaser</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                          |
| 9   | U-288            | 3 April 1944      | Swordfish of 819 Sqn from <i>Activity</i> during Arctic convoy. Shared with <i>Avengers</i> from 848 Sqn from <i>Tracker</i> .                         |
| 10  | U-674            | 2 May 1944        | Swordfish of 842 Sqn from <i>Fencer</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                          |
| 11  | U-959            | 2 May 1944        | Swordfish of 842 Sqn from <i>Fencer</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                          |
| 12  | U-354            | 25 August 1944    | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Vindex</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                          |
| 13  | U-921            | 30 September 1944 | Swordfish of 813 Sqn from <i>Campania</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                        |
| 14  | U-365            | 13 December 1944  | Swordfish of 813 Sqn from <i>Campania</i> during Arctic convoy.                                                                                        |
| 15  | U-589            | 14 September 1944 | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Avenger</i> during Arctic convoy. Shared with <i>Onslaught</i> .                                                          |
| 16  | U-203            | 25 April 1944     | Swordfish of 811 Sqn from <i>Biter</i> during Atlantic convoy. Shared with <i>Pathfinder</i> .                                                         |
| 17  | U-89             | 12 May 1944       | Swordfish of 811 Sqn from <i>Biter</i> during Atlantic convoy. Shared with <i>Broadway</i> and <i>Lagan</i> .                                          |
| 18  | U-472            | 4 March 1944      | Swordfish of 816 Sqn from <i>Chaser</i> during Arctic convoy. Shared with <i>Onslaught</i> .                                                           |
| 19  | U-653            | 15 March 1944     | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Vindex</i> during Atlantic anti-submarine sweep. Shared with <i>Starling</i> and <i>Wild Goose</i> .                      |
| 20  | U-765            | 6 May 1944        | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Vindex</i> during Atlantic anti-submarine sweep. Shared with <i>Aylmer</i> , <i>Bickerton</i> and <i>Bligh</i> .          |
| 21  | U-344            | 24 August 1944    | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Vindex</i> during Arctic convoy. Shared with <i>Mermaleid</i> , <i>Peacock</i> , <i>Keppel</i> and <i>Loch Dunvegan</i> . |
| 22  | U-394            | 2 September 1944  | Swordfish of 825 Sqn from <i>Vindex</i> during Arctic convoy. Shared with <i>Mermaleid</i> , <i>Peacock</i> , <i>Keppel</i> and <i>Loch Dunvegan</i> . |

Credited to Swordfish - 12% outright U-boat kills. 8 shared U-boat kills.

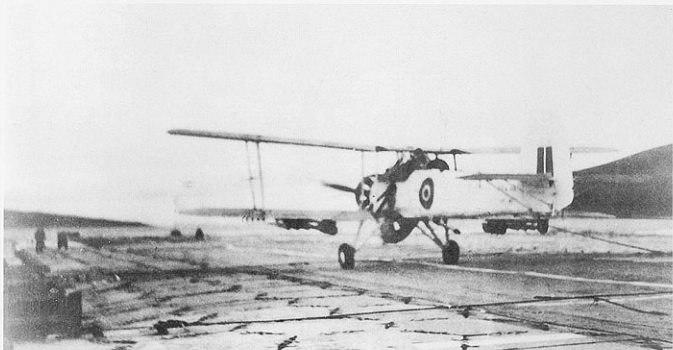
island of Madagascar (now the Malagasy Republic). There had been concern by the Allies that the Vichy French living there might allow Japanese use of their bases to cut off the supply route round the Cape.

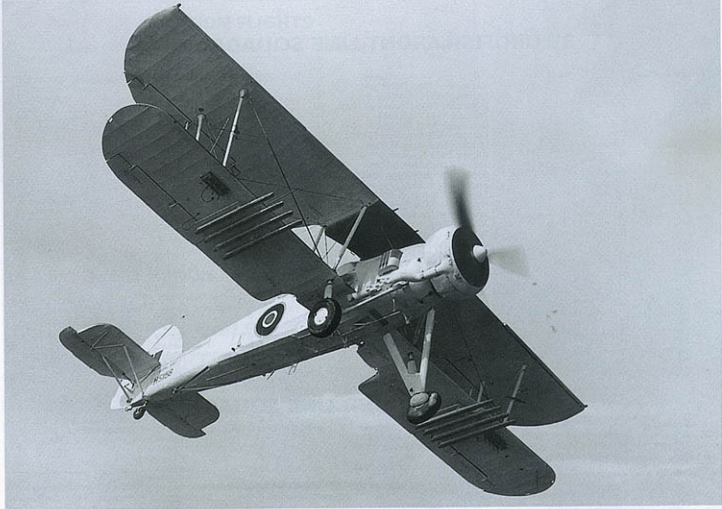
An amphibious assault was supported by *Illustrious* with 810 and 829 Squadrons embarked. Three strike forces of six Swordfish were flown off, the first force, armed with torpedoes attacked a French sloop, the *D'Entrecasteaux*, but without noticeable results. They then torpedoed the armed merchant cruiser *Bougainville* which blew up.

It was the second force armed with depth charges that sank the submarine *Beveziers* and the third force bombed a gun battery and the sloop *D'Entrecasteaux* after the inconclusive result earlier. Leading a charmed life the sloop tried to get under way later that morning but Swordfish again bombed it, driving it aground. Just to make sure, the Swordfish bombed it again later. Three other Swordfish dropped dummy paratroops on the south-west side of the island to draw off any Vichy French forces during the invasion. This was the last action in which Swordfish operated from the Fleet carriers, being replaced by Albacores, Barracudas and Avengers.

When war was declared in September 1939 the only carrier east of Suez was *HMS Eagle* operating in the China Station with 813 and 824 Squadrons, each with nine Swordfish, embarked. In October *HMS Glorious* was detached from the Mediterranean Fleet to protect the approaches to the Red Sea and Suez Canal from Aden. On board *Glorious* were 802 (six Sea Gladiators, 812 (12

A plan to provide floating airstrips to take the war to Japan was tested under code name 'LILY' at Lamash. The strip was 526 feet long by 60 feet wide and was made up of hundreds of hexagonal buoyancy cans with a flat surface placed on top. This picture shows Lt R. Jeffs just after the hook has engaged the wire. The war ended before a decision to use them could be made.





Swordfish), 823 (12 Swordfish) and 825 Squadron also with 12 Swordfish. These aircraft covered thousands of square miles in anti-submarine patrols but saw no action.

The demand for carriers elsewhere resulted in *Glorious* being returned to the Mediterranean Fleet, joined not long after by *Eagle* - leaving the Indian Ocean without a Fleet Air Arm presence except for a Walrus Flight aboard the heavy cruiser *HMS Kent*.

It was February 1941 before *Hermes* could

be spared once more to protect trade routes off the east coast of Africa and the approaches to the Red Sea. Her Swordfish were in action when 16 Axis merchant ships attempted to break out of Mogadishu in order to break the blockade. Most of these were found and stopped but some were sunk and one bombed to force it aground.

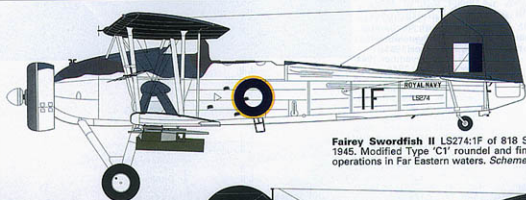
In April 1941 *Hermes* was despatched to help put down the rebellion in Iraq. Her Swordfish dive bombed Iraqi barracks and

A useful underside picture of Swordfish II HS158 on an acceptance test flight from the Blackburn factory at Sherburn-in-Elmet, Yorkshire. Delivered in 1942 this aircraft was lost on 30 August 1945.

ports and continued to aid the ground forces until the Iraqis gave up in late May.

*Hermes* carried out patrols in the Persian Gulf before moving into the Indian Ocean and then disembarked her Swordfish ashore

Continued on page 30



Fairey Swordfish II LS274:1F of 818 Squadron, 1945. Modified Type 'C1' roundel and fin flash for operations in Far Eastern waters. Scheme 4.



Fairey Swordfish III NF374:NH-M, No. 119 Squadron, RAF, based at Bircham Newton, 1945. Black overall with red codes and serial.

## SWORDFISH FRONT LINE SQUADRONS

| Squadron | Base                   | Dates                       | Marks      | Examples  |
|----------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|
| 810      | Evanton                | September 1937-March 1943   | I, II      | P4271-A2M |
| 811      | Donibristle            | October 1936-December 1944  | I, II, III | K8374-612 |
| 812      | Hal Far, Malta         | December 1936-December 1942 | I, II      | HS215-L   |
| 813      | Gosport                | January 1937-May 1945       | I, II, III | NR993-GP  |
| 814      | Eastleigh              | December 1938-December 1942 | I, II      | HS275-705 |
| 815      | Worthy Down            | October 1939-February 1943  | I, II      | P4087     |
| 816      | Furios                 | October 1939-August 1944    | I, II      | P4167-U4B |
| 818      | Evanton                | August 1939-November 1941   | I, II      | HS543     |
| 819      | Ford                   | January 1940-March 1945     | I, II, III | NP142-Z   |
| 820      | Evanton                | September 1937-June 1941    | I, II      | P4127-A4F |
| 821      | Eastleigh              | September 1937-March 1942   | I          | P4144-A5G |
| 822      | Gosport                | August 1937-March 1942      | I, II      | K6009-912 |
| 823      | Hal Far, Malta         | November 1938-April 1942    | I, II      | KS378-807 |
| 824      | Seletar, Singapore     | April 1937-October 1944     | I, II      | HS2224-2A |
| 825      | Hal Far, Malta         | July 1936-April 1945        | I, II, III | P3992-G5K |
| 826      | Bircham Newton         | July 1940-September 1941    | I          | L2739     |
| 828      | Hal Far, Malta         | October 1941-November 1941  | I          | -         |
| 829      | Ford                   | July 1940-October 1942      | I, II      | DK785     |
| 830      | Hal Far, Malta         | July 1940-March 1943        | I          | K8866-S   |
| 833      | Lee-on-Solent          | December 1941-January 1944  | I, II      | V4455-C   |
| 834      | Palisades, Jamaica     | December 1941-November 1942 | I, II      | HS559-4H  |
| 835      | Palisades, Jamaica     | February 1942-March 1945    | I, II, III | NR939-YC  |
| 836      | MAC-Ships              | March 1942-May 1945         | I, II, III | NS151-M3V |
| 837      | Palisades, Jamaica     | May 1942-June 1943          | I, II      | WS858     |
| 838      | Dartmouth, Nova Scotia | May 1942-February 1945      | I, II, III | V4387-2C  |
| 840      | Palisades, Jamaica     | June 1942-August 1943       | I, II      | HS609     |
| 841      | Cottishall             | January 1943-April 1943     | I, II      | V4446     |
| 842      | Lee-on-Solent          | February 1943-January 1945  | II         | HS625-G   |
| 860      | Donibristle            | June 1943-June 1945         | I, II, III | LS437-S2  |
| 886      | Attacker               | June 1943-October 1943      | II         | HS547-L   |

## SWORDFISH SECOND LINE SQUADRONS

| Squadron | Base                    | Dates                        | Marks      | Examples   |
|----------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 700      | Hatston                 | January 1940-January 1942    | I          | L9767      |
| 701      | Shin's Flights          | September 1938-January 1940  | I          | K8446-075  |
| 702      | Catapult Flights        | 1938-January 1940            | I          | P4199-E8F  |
| 703      | Catapult Flights        | October 1942-November 1942   | I          | K5993      |
| 704      | Kalafrana, Malta        | July 1936-January 1940       | I          | K5954-083  |
| 705      | Burscough               | February 1945-September 1945 | II, III    | NF313-B    |
| 710      | Ronaldsway, Isle of Man | October 1944-June 1945       | I, II      | LS459      |
| 722      | Tambaram, India         | May 1945-October 1945        | -          | -          |
| 726      | Durban, South Africa    | August 1943-November 1945    | I, II      | V4704      |
| 727      | North Front, Gibraltar  | May 1943-September 1944      | -          | -          |
| 728      | North Front, Gibraltar  | May 1943-February 1945       | -          | L2831      |
| 730      | Ayr                     | January 1945-August 1945     | II         | NE988      |
| 731      | Easthaven               | December 1943-November 1945  | I, II      | NF247      |
| 733      | Trincomalee, Ceylon     | -                            | -          | -          |
| 735      | Inskip                  | August 1943-June 1944        | I, II      | HS333      |
| 737      | Inskip                  | March 1944-July 1945         | I          | LS448-A2C  |
| 739      | Lee-on-Solent           | December 1942-November 1943  | I          | V4711      |
| 740      | Arbroath                | May 1943-August 1945         | I, II, III | WS971      |
| 741      | Arbroath                | March 1943-March 1945        | I, II      | HS223-A3C  |
| 742      | Colombo, Ceylon         | December 1943-October 1945   | II         | HS548      |
| 743      | Lee-on-Solent           | March 1943-March 1945        | II         | HS448-K3   |
| 744      | Maydown                 | March 1944-May 1945          | I, II, III | NS120-N7X  |
| 745      | Lee-on-Solent           | March 1943-February 1944     | II         | HS491-P3   |
| 747      | Fearn                   | March 1943-February 1944     | I, II      | V4644      |
| 753      | Lee-on-Solent           | December 1939-June 1945      | II         | V4641-W4R  |
| 754      | Yarmouth, Nova Scotia   | June 1944-March 1945         | -          | -          |
| 756      | Katukurunda, Ceylon     | March 1944-February 1945     | II         | LS348-KL   |
| 759      | Eastleigh               | November 1939-May 1943       | I, II      | L9737      |
| 763      | Worthy Down             | December 1939-July 1945      | I, II      | NF151      |
| 764      | Lee-on-Solent           | April 1940-September 1941    | I          | P4220      |
| 765      | Lee-on-Solent           | May 1939-June 1941           | I          | P4084-Y8L  |
| 766      | Machrihanish            | April 1942-November 1944     | I, II, III | HS293-KIV  |
| 767      | Donibristle             | May 1939-May 1944            | I, II      | L2817-74F  |
| 768      | Arbroath                | January 1941-October 1945    | I, II, III | NR955      |
| 769      | Arbroath                | November 1941-February 1944  | I, II      | L2861-U    |
| 770      | Lee-on-Solent           | December 1939-April 1940     | I          | L2857      |
| 771      | Portland                | May 1939-April 1945          | I          | L7678-R5G  |
| 772      | Lee-on-Solent           | September 1939-August 1945   | I, II      | L9736      |
| 773      | Bermuda                 | June 1940-September 1943     | I          | V4705      |
| 774      | Worthy Down             | November 1938-August 1944    | I, II      | DK670      |
| 775      | Dekhelia, Egypt         | May 1941-January 1945        | I, II      | V4436      |
| 776      | Speke                   | August 1944-December 1944    | I, II      | LS348-R8M  |
| 777      | Hastings, Sierra Leone  | August 1941-February 1944    | I, II      | P4220      |
| 778      | Lee-on-Solent           | September 1939-February 1945 | I, II      | DK688      |
| 779      | North Front, Gibraltar  | October 1941-August 1943     | I, II      | V4380-G    |
| 780      | Eastleigh               | June 1944-7 1944             | I, II      | HS329-BYIU |
| 781      | Lee-on-Solent           | September 1940-February 1943 | I, II      | V3787-L5S  |
| 782      | Donibristle             | December 1940-March 1941     | I          | P4219      |
| 783      | Arbroath                | June 1942-July 1945          | I, II      | LS442-AOR  |
| 785      | Crail                   | November 1941-May 1944       | I, II      | L9739-C4X  |
| 786      | Crail                   | May 1941-7 1943              | I          | DK745      |
| 787      | Arbroath                | June 1944-October 1944       | II         | L2805      |
| 788      | China Bay               | February 1942-June 1944      | I, II      | HS165      |
| 789      | Wingfield, South Africa | July 1942-November 1945      | I, II      | V4430      |
| 791      | Arbroath                | April 1942-December 1944     | I, II      | P4322-ABM  |
| 794      | Yeovilton               | August 1940-June 1945        | I, II      | KS438      |
| 796      | Port Reitz, East Africa | July 1942-March 1944         | I, II      | WS857-P    |
| 797      | Colombo, Ceylon         | November 1943-August 1945    | I          | L9723      |
| 1700     | Sembawang               | January 1946-February 1945   | -          | -          |

Continued on next page

## STATION FLIGHTS

| Base             | Dates                       | Marks | Examples     |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Anthorn          | November 1944-February 1948 | II    | NF399-912/AO |
| Belfast          | May 1945-August 1945        | II    | NF115        |
| Burscough        | June 1945-September 1945    | II    | LS158        |
| Colombo, Ceylon  | November 1944-?             | I     | V4651        |
| Donibristle      | May 1943-?                  | I     | K8876        |
| Fearn            | March 1944-June 1944        | II    | HS214        |
| Machrihanish     | November 1943-?             | I     | V4634        |
| Tambaram, Ceylon | February 1945-?             | I     | L2745        |
| Tanga            | March 1945-?                | I     | -            |

## SHIP'S FLIGHTS

|             |                              |      |       |
|-------------|------------------------------|------|-------|
| Segum       | July 1945-October 1945       | II   | LS353 |
| Emperor     | September 1944-November 1944 | II   | HS170 |
| Indomitable | November 1941-August 1942    | IT/T | V4599 |

## FERRY POOLS

|             |                       |       |       |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| Donibristle | July 1943-May 1944    | I, II | K8876 |
| Worthy Down | June 1945-August 1945 | III   | NR913 |

## FLEET REQUIREMENT UNIT (FRU)

|                                                                              |                      |   |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---|-------|
| Lee-on-Solent                                                                | August 1938-May 1939 | I | L7577 |
| Storage and Maintenance Units that accepted, modified and repaired Swordfish |                      |   |       |

## CANADA

No. 6 Bombing & Gunnery School, Saskatoon  
No. 1 Wireless School, Ontario

## RAF UNITS

No. 8 Squadron, Aden 1940-1941  
No. 119 Squadron, January 1945-May 1945  
No. 202 Squadron, October 1940-June 1941  
No. 3 AACU, Kalafra, Malta, March 1937-  
July 1941

No. 4 AACU, Seletar, Malaya, 1941  
No. 9 (PIAFU), September 1942-1945  
Torpedo Training Unit, Gosport, 1935-1942.

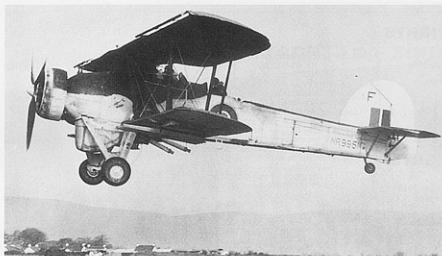
The view from the front seat of an 836 Squadron Swordfish of 'E' Flight as it approaches MAC-Ship *Amatra* to land on.

An experimental fitting of a Leigh-Light under the port wing of this Swordfish. The power pack required to light it was mounted between the undercarriage legs.



Above: The three-man crew of a Swordfish preparing for an anti-submarine patrol. This was taken in East Africa but it could have been at any Fleet Air Arm station. (IWM) Below: The last Swordfish to be built - Mk. III NS204 - although orders had been received for another 600, they were subsequently cancelled. NS204 served with 835 Squadron until placed in store in March 1945. (Hawker Siddeley photo)





Continued from page 27

in Ceylon before going to Simonstown, South Africa, for a refit.

Also ashore were a few Swordfish from 788 Squadron. On 5 April the Japanese launched an attack on Colombo and during the days action, six Swordfish of 814 Squadron, en route to another airfield, were all shot down. Fortunately the Japanese, after sinking any ships that they felt posed a threat to their plans, considered the central area of the Indian Ocean only a minor thorn in their side and concentrated on trying to invade India via Burma.

Due to circumstances that required aircraft carriers elsewhere at this time in the war, there was no naval air cover for the Indian

Swordfish were experimentally used for RATO - Rocket Assisted Take Off trials. This aircraft, a Mk. III, NR995/G is seen during some of these. The aircraft could be flown off of the smaller carriers with extra fuel and armament in time of need but although successful the use was limited.

Ocean until October 1943 when HMS *Battler* was sent to provide anti-submarine cover. She embarked 12 Swordfish of 834 Squadron plus six Seafires, and stayed on station until late 1944. Most of the work entailed anti-submarine patrols and homing surface ships to other targets.

Post-war Swordfish. Delivered on 20 April 1944 this picture of Swordfish NF399-912-AO was taken at Arbroath in 1948 but was used by other units after this until written off on 2 July 1951. (Hughes)



## SWORDFISH ACCIDENTS



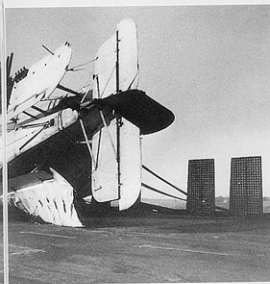
### FAIREY SWORDFISH KITS AND DECALS

Compiled by David Hannant Correct to November 1997

| Scale | Type                     | Manufacturer | Reference | Remarks                  |
|-------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1:48  | Swordfish                | Aeroclub     | AEV082    | Engine accessories, prop |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Airwaves     | AEC72178  | Brass etched accessories |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Airkit       | ATC63     | Photo neg instruments    |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Airfix       | AX02071   | Injection moulded kit    |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Chematic     | CH72258   | Kit (ex-Frog)            |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish Mk. III | Cooperative  | CT7204    | Kit (ex-Frog)            |
| 1:32  | Fairey Swordfish         | ID Models    | ID3232    | Vacuum kit               |
| 1:48  | Fairey Swordfish         | MDC          | MDCK001   | Resin, white metal kit   |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Novo         | NOV258    | Kit (ex-Frog)            |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish Mk. III | Matchbox     | PK112     | Injection moulded kit    |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish Mk. I   | Plastyk      | PYS115    | Kit (Ex-Frog)            |
| 1:50  | Fairey Swordfish         | Smer         | SR113     | Injection moulded kit    |
| 1:72  | Fairey Swordfish         | Travers      | TV23      | Decal sheet              |

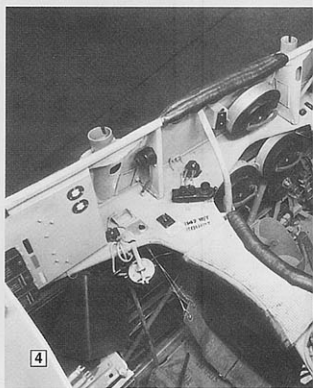
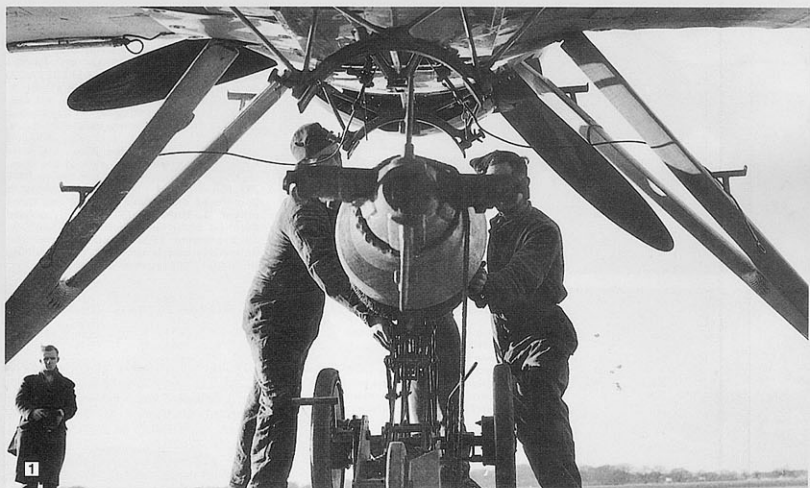


1. Written off in an accident at Lawrencetown, Canada, on 17 October 1944, HS487-F3 was serving with 745 Squadron. 2. Storm damage that caused havoc to two Swordfish on *Empire Mackay*. The nearest aircraft is LS277-D2. Both are from 836 Squadron 'D' Flight. 3. Missed wire, hit barriers, engine fell out. LS231-D on *HMS Striker*, 1 September 1944. 4. The upper wing camouflage pattern is of interest on this pranged Swordfish on *HMS Argus*. Also noticeable is a white line down the side of the fuselage. 5. A Swordfish crash and fire on *HMS Ark Royal* dated 1 August 1941. A 40 lb bomb exploded killing the crew and three others. 6. These two Swordfish collided during a night take off from Arbroath on 20 September 1943. From 767 and 769 Squadrons which provided deck landing training, L2862 crashed into V4290

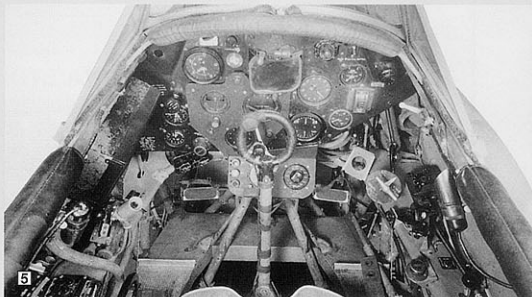


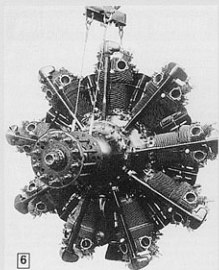
The Royal Navy have always been quick off the mark to take photographs of their aircraft after an accident has occurred. At sea a photographer was almost always present during flying operations and as a result many pictures have been available of this type of mishap. Some of the wartime ones both at sea and in shore bases are shown here.



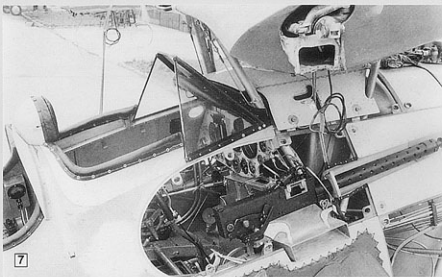


1. Loading a torpedo onto a Swordfish. Note the two cradles to which it will be attached. 2. The enclosed cockpit on Swordfish IV HS553. 3. The Observer's cockpit without instrumentation. 4. Swordfish II rear cockpit with instruments, radio and Vickers gun in place. 5. Swordfish II V4689, pilot's cockpit.





6

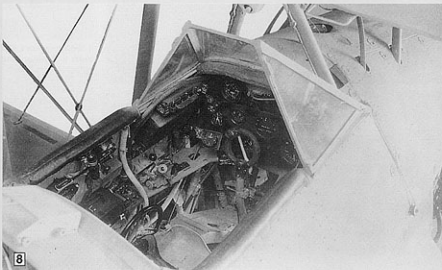
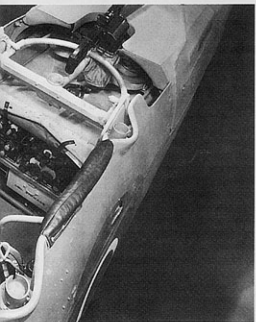


7

# SWORDFISH IN DETAIL

Pictures from W. A. Harrison, Bristol Aircraft, Fox Photos, Fairey Aviation and Ian Huntley

6. Bristol Pegasus III M3 engine which powered most Swordfish. 7. The front cockpit area showing the mounting of the Vickers .303 machine gun. 8. Pilot's cockpit from the starboard side of a Swordfish Mk. II. 9. The rear fuselage, port side of Swordfish II V4689/G showing the arrester hook and damper. External control wires to the tail unit can also be identified at the top of the picture. The internal structure is a floatation bag.



8

10. Swordfish prototype K4190 showing the complete tail unit and markings. The serial number is thinly outlined in white. The original rudder and short tailwheel have still to be altered.



9



10

## Longest serving Swordfish

Swordfish LS326 of the Royal Navy's Historic Flight is worthy of a page all of its own due to the continuous service it has given since it was first built in August 1943.

Its first operational use was with 836 Squadron, 'L' Flight, on board the *MV Rapana* a MAC-Ship, from September 1943, coded 'L2'. After suffering an accidentally broken wing when the axle fork securing pin gave way during a deck landing, it was repaired and then went to 836 Squadron, 'K' Flight on the *MV Empire MacCallum* in February 1944.

After the war it was declared surplus and bought back by Fairey Aviation in May 1950 to be painted blue and silver and given the civil registration G-AJVH. Subsequently it was given to the Royal Navy and repainted in camouflage colours, coded '5A'.

As the oldest aircraft in the Royal Navy Historic Flight it has been displayed at countless air shows. A later colour scheme was applied in the mid-1960s still coded '5A' but its current scheme was applied in 1980 when it was decided to return it to its original configuration. It now bears the code 'L2', as near as possible to its 1943 appearance.



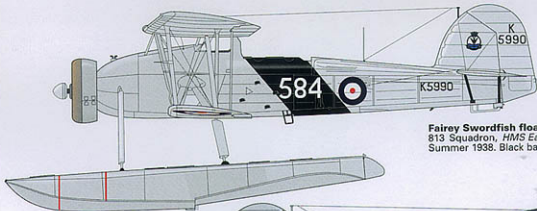
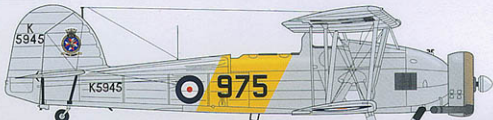
1. Fairey gave LS326 the civil registration G-AJVH. It is seen here with a Fulmar and Gannet. 2 and 3. The original RNHF colour scheme was Extra Dark Sea Grey, Dark Slate Grey and Sky with the code '5A'. 4 and 5. Mid-term colours - two pictures taken in the early 1970s. 6. The present day scheme replicates that which the aircraft originally wore when first operational.





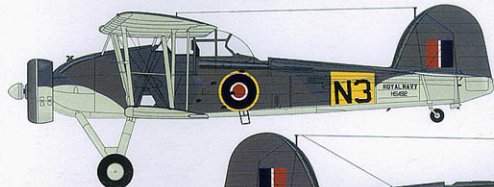
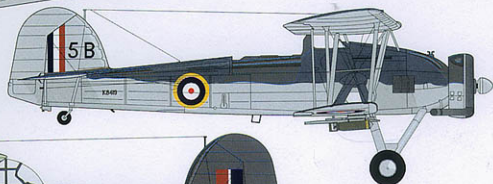
**Fairey Swordfish I**  
K5945-975, 825  
Squadron, HMS  
Glorious, Malta,  
August 1938. Yellow  
band. Squadron  
badge on fin.  
Scheme 1.

825 Squadron badge



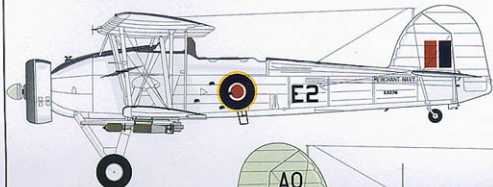
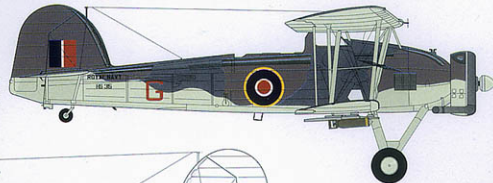
**Fairey Swordfish floatplane** K5990-584  
813 Squadron, HMS Eagle China Station,  
Summer 1938. Black band. Scheme 1.

**Fairey Swordfish I** K8419-5B,  
824 Squadron, 1941. Flown by  
pilot John Welham, the aircraft  
helped to sink the Italian subma-  
rine *Iride* on 22 August 1940.  
Black codes. Scheme 2.



**Fairey Swordfish IV** HS492-N3.  
Naval Air Gunnery School,  
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia 1944.  
Black code on yellow panel. 'N3'  
repeated inboard of roundel on  
upper starboard wing. Scheme 3.

**Fairey Swordfish II** HS315-G of  
842 Squadron, HMS Fencer, mid-  
1943. Red codes, Sky spinner.  
Scheme 4.



**Fairey Swordfish** LS276-E2,  
836 Squadron, E Flight, MAC-  
Ship *Amatra* 1943-44. Black  
codes, Sky spinner. 'Merchant  
Navy' replaces 'Royal Navy' on  
rear fuselage. Scheme 4.



**Fairey Swordfish III** NF399-912-AO Station Flight  
RNAS Arbroath, 1948. Colour scheme: Extra Dark  
Sea Grey and Sky. Black codes.



Not a pre-war Swordfish but one of the two still flying in the UK. Mk. I W5856 was rebuilt by British Aerospace at Brough and Rolls Royce at Filton to flying condition in order to make its second 'first' flight from Brough airfield on 22 May 1993 when it was formally handed over to the Royal Navy Historic Flight. It has been repainted in pre-war colours representing a Swordfish from 810 Squadron. The aircraft was originally built at Sherburn-in-Elmet in 1941 and saw both Mediterranean and English Channel service. It then went to Canada in 1944 and was brought back to the UK in a very dilapidated condition. The rebuild took three years to complete. (BAe pictures)



## SWORDFISH SPECIFICATION

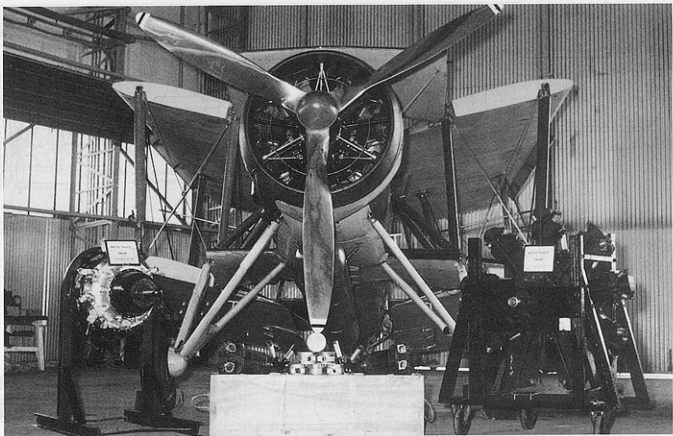
**Dimensions:** Span, upper mainplane 45ft 6in  
lower mainplane 43ft 9in  
Width, folded 17ft 3in  
Length: 36 ft 1 in  
Height, tail down 12ft 10in  
on floats 14ft 7in  
Wing area 607 sq ft

**Weights:** Empty 4,700 lb  
With floats 5,300 lb  
Loaded 8,700 lb  
Max overload 9,250 lb

**Engine:** Bristol Pegasus 7-cylinder air-cooled radial - Mk.IIIM3 rated at 690 bhp at 3,500 ft, later changed to Pegasus 30 rated at 750 bhp at 4,750 ft. Fairey-Reed fixed pitch, three-bladed metal propeller.

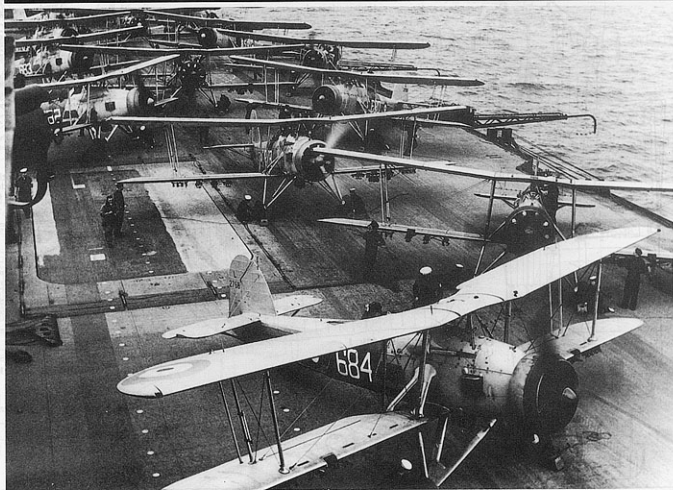
**Armament:** One fixed Vickers .303 machine gun (600 rounds) mounted on starboard front fuselage and operated by pilot. One Lewis .303 machine gun (6 magazines) attached to Fairey High Speed Gun Mounting in rear cockpit. Could carry one 1,610 lb torpedo or 1,500 lb sea mine or 1,500 lb bombs or depth charges. Mk. II and Mk.III could carry eight 60 lb rocket projectiles under the wings.

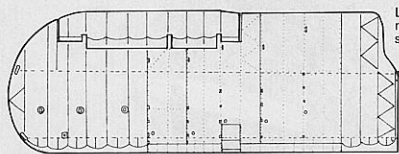
**Performance:** (based on loaded Mk. II)  
Max speed: 132 mph at sea level  
139 mph at 4,750 ft  
Economical cruise: 104 mph at 5,000 ft  
Range with 1,500 lb - 546 miles  
Range empty - 770 miles  
Rate of climb: 1,200 ft/min  
Time to 5,000 ft: 10 minutes  
Service ceiling: 12,400 ft  
Max ceiling: 19,250 ft  
Deck take-off run: 180 yds  
with 20kt wind 115 yds  
with 30kt wind 62 yds  
with 40kt wind  
Landing run: 550 yds  
Fuel capacity: Main fuselage tank had 155 gall plus 12.5 gall gravity tank. Long range tank holding 60 gall could be fitted in rear cockpit. Possible to carry a 60 gall tank slung below fuselage on torpedo crutches.



## Fairey Swordfish 1:72nd scale plans

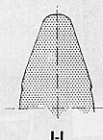
Above: The Fleet Air Arm's static display Swordfish II HS618. Below: Swordfish of 821 Squadron taxi forward for take off from HMS Courageous in 1938.



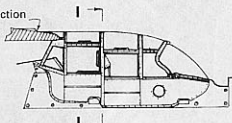


Lower surface of bottom mainplane showing metal skinning portion on Mk. II

Metal skinning

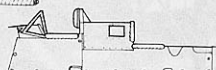


Centre Section



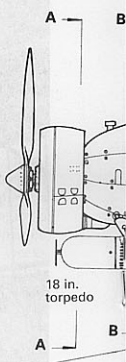
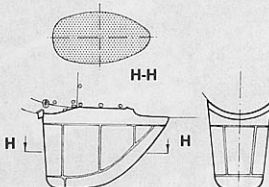
**Fairey Swordfish Mk. IV**  
Detail of cockpit canopy

Centre section

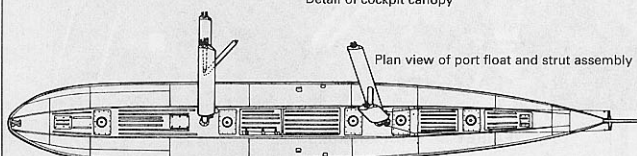


**Fairey Swordfish Mk. III**  
Cockpit detail

**Fairey Swordfish AS. Mk.III**  
ASV Mk. X installation



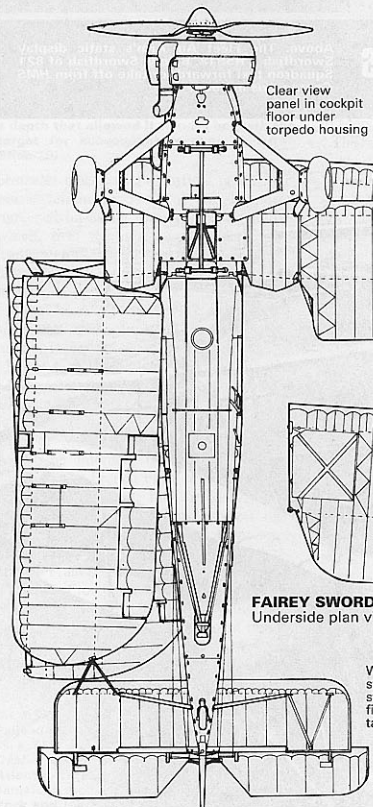
18 in. torpedo



Plan view of port float and strut assembly

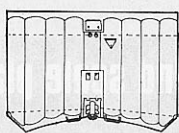
# Fairey SWORDFISH

Drawings by Ian Huntley

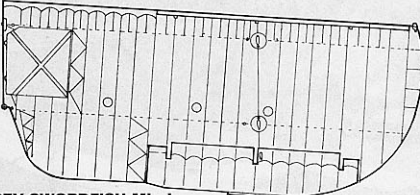


**FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk. I**  
Underside plan view

Clear view panel in cockpit floor under torpedo housing

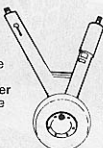


Undersurface of centre section

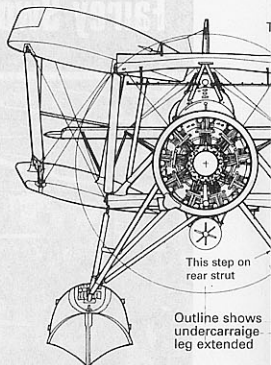


Undersurface of upper mainplane

Wing stowage strut fits under tailplane

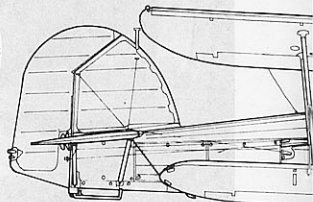


Limit of undercarriage leg extension when aircraft is airborne



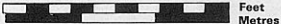
This step on rear strut

Outline shows undercarriage leg extended



**FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk. I** (floatplane)  
Starboard side view

1:72nd SCALE



Feet  
Metres

