

## 1930's

After many years of cuts in defence spending, the emerging threat of Hitler's Germany led to rearmament in the 1930's. New monoplane designs from Germany had rendered British aircraft obsolete overnight, so rebuilding and modernising the RAF became a top priority. Unfortunately for the Royal Navy however, modernisation of the Fleet Air Arm would have to wait, as the full potential of the aircraft carrier had yet to be demonstrated.

The Fleet Air Arm of the 1930's therefore made do with biplane fighters and torpedo bombers and an inadequate fleet of aircraft carriers, many of which had started life as First World War cruisers. Control of Naval aircraft returned to the Royal Navy just before the outbreak of war.

### GLOSTER SEA GLADIATOR Mk 1

**Role**

Fighter

**Entered Service**

1937

**Weight**

Empty: 1560kg

Loaded: 2500kg

**Maximum Speed**

257mph @5000ft

**Weapons**

4 x Browning .303 machine guns



### KEY EVENTS

**1931:**

*HMS Courageous* tests the first modern arrestor gear. Wires across the deck attached to braking systems bring landing aircraft to a halt by catching hooks fitted to the aircraft.

**1935:**

The first rotary wing aircraft landing on a carrier as Juan de la Cierva landed an autogyro on *HMS Furious*.

**1936:**

The Fairey Swordfish enters service, a biplane torpedo bomber that would shine in the Second World War.

**1937:**

The Gloster Sea Gladiator enters service, the last biplane fighter to serve with the Royal Navy. New monoplane fighters render the Sea Gladiator obsolete almost before it enters service.

**1937:**

The Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Air Force becomes the Naval Air Branch of the Royal Navy.

**1939:**

Full control of the Naval Air Branch is given to the Admiralty.

**1939 September:**

Lt McEwen in a Skua of 803 Naval Air Squadron shot down the first German aircraft of WW2.