



1940's

During the early 1940's Britain was at war. Many battles took place both at sea and in the air, the most significant of these being the naval Battle of Taranto. The Royal Navy launched the first all aircraft naval attack in history, flying a small number of aircraft from a carrier in the Mediterranean and attacking the Italian fleet in the harbour at Taranto. The effect of the British carrier on the Italian warships foreshadowed the end of the 'Big Gun' ship and the rise of naval air power.

By the end of the war the strength of the Fleet Air Arm was 59 aircraft carriers, 3700 aircraft, 72000 officers and men and 56 air stations all over the world. The aircraft carrier had replaced the battleship as the capital ship and its aircraft were now strike weapons in their own right.

FAIREY SWORDFISH Mk 2

Role

Anti-surface warfare

Entered Service

1936

Weight

Empty: 1900kg

Loaded: 3500kg

Maximum Speed

138mph @5000ft

Weapons

7.7mm Vickers Machine Gun

27kg RP-3 Rocket Projectiles

760kg torpedo or 700kg mine



KEY EVENTS

1942 February:

Lt Eugene Esmonde won Victoria Cross for actions undertaken during Channel Dash.

1944 January:

First operational use of helicopter, the Sikorsky R4.

1945 August:

Lt Robert Hampton Gray won posthumous Victoria Cross for single-handedly sinking Japanese destroyer.

1948:

HMS Vengeance, a light fleet aircraft carrier carried out cold weather trials in the Arctic. Commercial helicopters were embarked.

1949:

Sea Vampire jet propelled aircraft trials carried out on *HMS Implacable* and *HMS Warrior*.

Battles:

Atlantic 1939-45, English Channel 1939-45, North Sea 1939-45, Biscay 1940-45, Norway 1940-45, Libya 1940-45, Mediterranean 1940-45, Narvik 1940, Dunkirk 1940, Battle of Britain 1940, Calabria 1940, Taranto 1940, Spartivento 1940, Malta Convoys 1941-42, Matapan 1941, Crete 1941, Bismarck 1941, Arctic 1941-45, Malaya 1942-45, Diego Suarez 1942, North Africa 1942-43, Sicily 1943, Salerno 1943, Aegean 1944, Normandy 1944, Sabang 1944, South France 1944, Burma 1944-45, Palembang 1945, Okinawa 1945, Japan 1945.



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