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825

squadron

(Canada)



Operational History and Background

On the outbreak of war, this torpedo spotter reconnaissance Swordfish squadron embarked from Dekheila, Egypt to HMS Glorious in search of enemy shipping in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea.

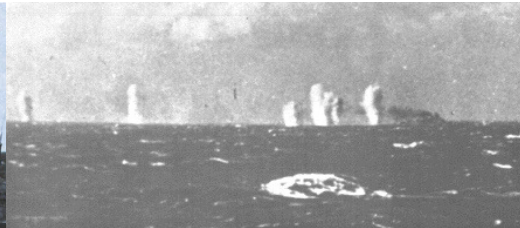
The ship returned to the Mediterranean in January 1940, the squadron operating from Hal Far, Malta until March 1940 when the ship was recalled for the defence of Norway. The squadron disembarked at Prestwick. HMS Glorious was sunk by the German battleships Gneisenau

and Scharnhorst on 8 June 1940, and the squadron operated from Worthy Down, Detling and Thorney Island in operations against the advancing German forces in the Low countries and France. Eight of the 12 aircraft were lost during the Dunkirk evacuations including the CO L/C JB Buckley RN, when 5 aircraft were lost in one bombing raid over France on 29 May 1940.

In July 1940 the remnants of the squadron were augmented to 9 aircraft and embarked on HMS Furious for operations in September including night attacks on Trondheim and Tromso.



Wartime colour photograph of the Bismarck at sea



Bismarck smoking on the horizon whilst under fire from the Fleet immediately prior to her being sunk, 26 May 1941

In February 1941 the squadron undertook convoy duties with HMS Furious to the Gold Coast, and in May 1941 the squadron joined HMS Victorious, taking part in the successful attack on the German Battleship Bismarck. The squadron swordfish sighted the Bismarck on 24 May 1941, and made its attack the following day on 25 May 1941, one hit reduced her speed. The Bismarck was crippled in a later strike by 810/818 squadrons on 26 May and sunk by the Fleet on 27 May 1941.



Lt Cdr Esmonde and 825 sqdn air crews involved in the sinking in the Bismarck May 1941

From June 1941 the Squadron embarked on HMS Ark Royal for Malta convoy duties, and in September was involved in attacking targets in Pantellaria, Sardinia and Sicily. When HMS Ark Royal was torpedoed on 13 November 1941 the remnants of the squadron flew to Gibraltar and ceased to exist.



Wartime colour photograph on the Scharnhorst

In January 1942 the squadron was reformed at Lee-on-Solent with swordfish for torpedo bomber reconnaissance duties, 6 aircraft attacking the German battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau from Manston in the English Channel, no hits were achieved and all the aircraft were lost. The CO, Lt Cdr E Esmonde was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, and the 5 surviving crew members were also decorated.

The squadron regrouped at Lee-on-Solent in March 1942, 3 aircraft subsequently embarking on HMS Avenger for Arctic convoy duties to Russia during which 6 U-Boats were attacked, and U-Boat U-589 was sunk shared with HMS Onslow. The squadron then carrying out operations under 16th Group RAF Coastal Command from Thorney Island and Exeter.

From March 1943 the squadron embarked on HMS Furious for convoy duties to Iceland and sweeps off the Norwegian coast. In December 1943 the squadron embarked on HMS Vindex, with a fighter flight of 6 Sea Hurricane IICs and later also 3 Fulmars, for Atlantic convoys, sinking U-653 on 15 March 1944 and U-765 on 6 May 1944.

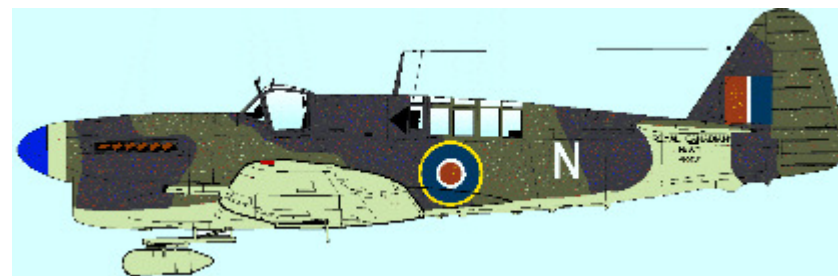
[Telegraphist / Air Gunner Derek Foster \(Fleet Air Arm\)](#)

Trained as a Telegraphist Air Gunner, Derek Foster's first posting was with 825 Squadron aboard HMS Vindex in the North Atlantic, searching for German submarines. Later, in the Far East, Foster served on HMS Victorious attacking Japanese islands as well as the mainland.



In August, the squadron now re-equipped with 12 Swordfish IIIs embarked on HMS Vindex for Arctic convoys to Russia, sinking U-354 on 22 August 1944, Sea Hurricanes damaging another the same day, and claiming a possible on 23 August 1944. The next day on 24 August U-344 was sunk jointly with the Fleet, and U-394 sunk on 2 September 1944.

In March 1945 the squadron embarked on HMS Campania, the Sea Hurricanes having been replaced by 8 Wildcat VIs, for further Arctic convoy duties. On return the Swordfish were absorbed by 815 squadron and the Wildcats continued in 825 until also absorbed in May 1945.



FAIREY FIREFLY FR.I, PP431 "N", 825 Sqn RCN, HMCS Warrior, 1947 [\[A0456\]](#)

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The squadron was reformed in July 1945 as a Canadian-manned squadron at Rattray intended to join the 19th Carrier Air Group in a Colossus-class carrier equipped with 12 Barracuda IIs with ASH radar. However the squadron was still at Rattray Head by VJ-Day. 825 Squadron remained as part of the Royal Navy until it was transferred to the RCN in January 1946 upon the commissioning of HMCS Warrior. It was later renumbered to 880 Squadron (RCN) in May 1951 and the 825 designation returned to the Royal Navy.



Swordfish of 825 sqdn being launched against the German battleship Bismarck
(painting by R Taylor)

Battle Honours

Dunkirk 1940, English Channel 1940 - 2, Norway 1940, 'Bismarck' 1941, Malta Convoys 1941, Arctic 1942 - 5, Atlantic 1944

Commanding Officers and Squadron Personnel

- L/C JW Hale, RN Aug 1938-Jan 1940
- L/C JB Buckley, RN Jan 1940-May 1940
- L/C(A) E Esmonde, DSO, RN May 1940-Nov 1941
- L/C(A) E Esmonde, VC, DSO, RN Jan 1942-Feb 1942
- L/C(A) S Keane, RN Feb 1942-Dec 1942
- L/C(A) AHD Gough, RN Feb 1944-May 1944
- L/C(A) FGB Sheffield, DSC, RNVR May 1944-Feb 1945
- L/C P Snow, RN Feb 1945-April 1945
- L/C(A) F Stovin-Bradford, DSC, RN July 1945-end of WW2

Aircraft

- Swordfish I July 1936-June 1944
- Swordfish II March 1942-June 1944
- Swordfish III June 1944-April 1945
- Sea Hurricane IIc Aug 1943-Sept 1944
- Wildcat VI Nov 1944-April 1945
- Barracuda II (ASH) July 1945-end of WW2

Ships and Squadron bases

To be listed

The Squadron Today

[Link to current Fleet Air Arm squadron information](#)

Associations and Reunions

- **825 Naval Air Squadron Aircrew 1939-45 and Korea**

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FURTHER INFORMATION

[World Aircraft Carrier Lists and Photo Gallery - from 1913 to 2000.](#) Naval History Information Center, Haze Gray & Underway

American based World Aircraft Carrier Lists & Photo Gallery - one of the definitive online sources for British and world aircraft carrier & seaplane tender data, histories and images - over 1000 photos.

[825 squadron - See Canadian subsequent history of the squadron](#)

[With Gallantry and Determination" The Story of the Torpedoing of the Bismarck by Mark E. Horan](#)

Sturtivant, R & Ballance, T (1994). 'The Squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm' Published by Air Britain (Historians) Ltd, 1994 ISBN: 0 85130 223 8

[Robert Horsten's FAA Squadrons](#)

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