



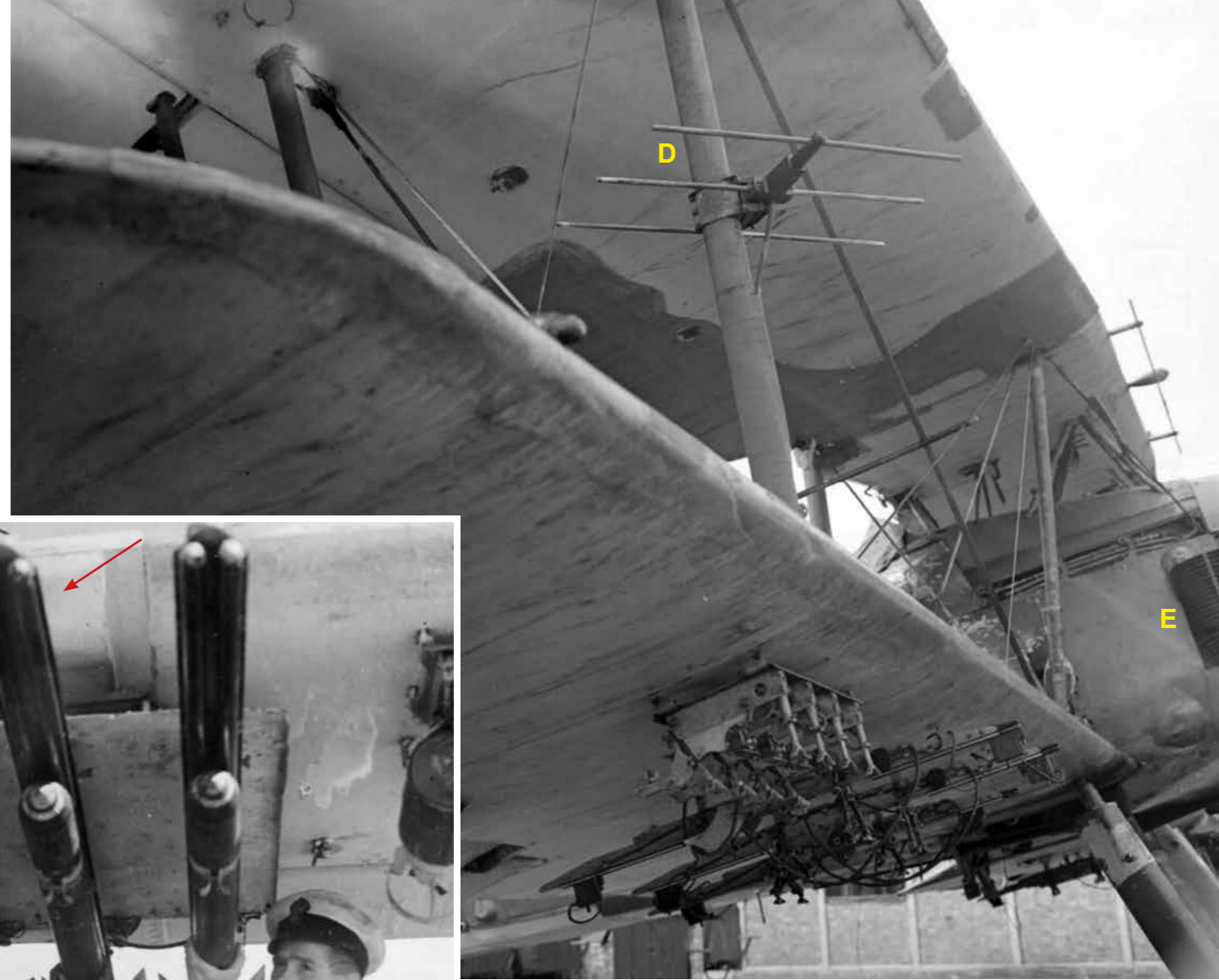
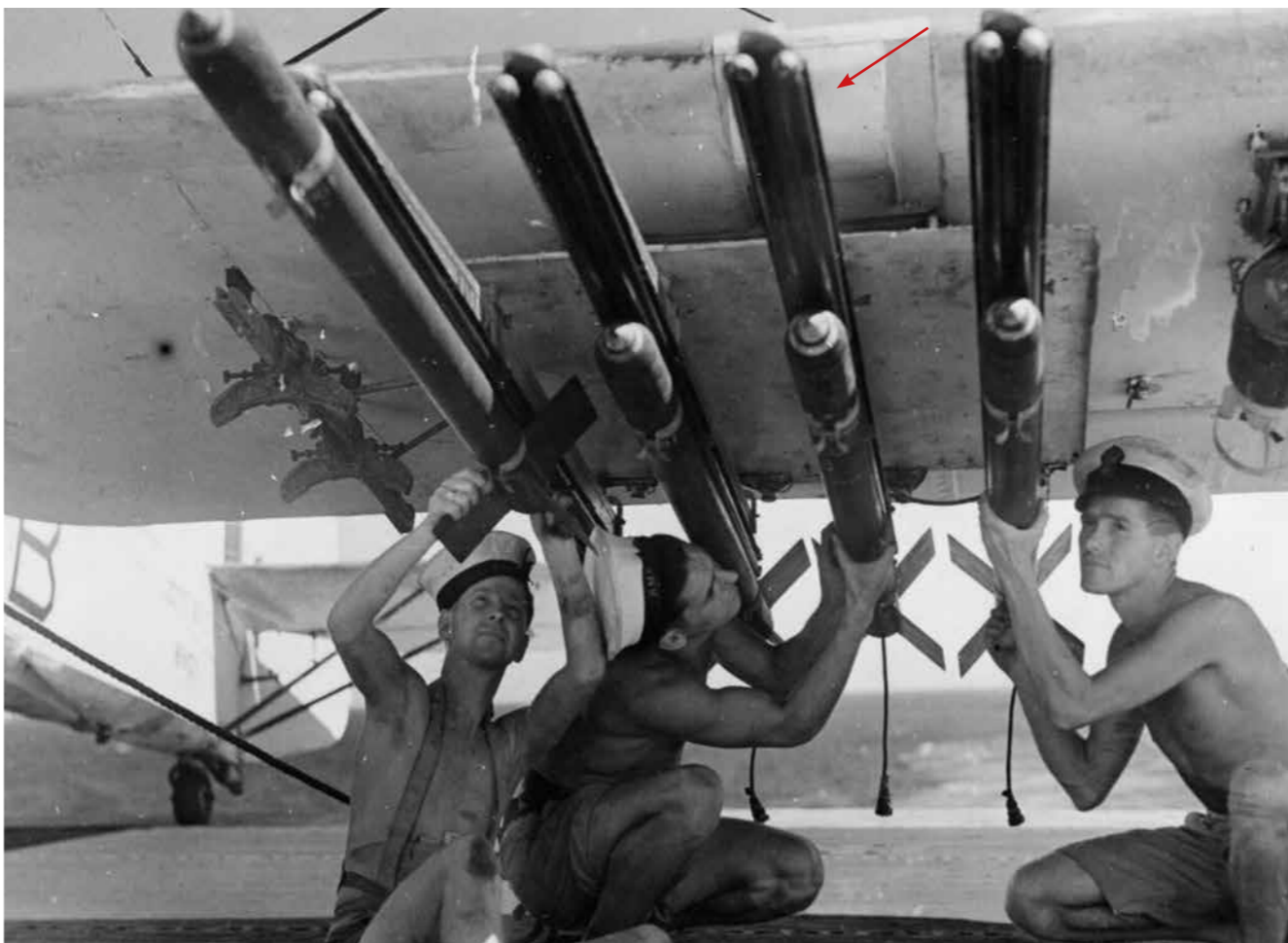
Left: The Swordfish's fuselage interior below the air gunner's position with both side panels removed, showing the type's tubular steel metal framework that was covered in fabric.

(A) is a flotation bag, (B) balance weights, (C) lead beads on the end of the trailing aerial.

Below: An unusual view of the arrestor hook deployed in flight.



Below: Ground crew loading 3 inch Rocket Projectiles (RPs), fitted with 25lb Armour Piercing (AP) warheads for anti-shiping/U-Boat strikes, on to launch rails mounted on blast plates. The Swordfish Mk.II introduced metal skinning on the lower mainplane under surfaces, allowing it to carry heavier loads including RPs. To the left of the RPs is a standard Universal Bomb Carrier which could be loaded with bombs or depth charges. The landing light (arrowed) has been covered to avoid damage from the rocket blast.



Above: ASV (Air-to-Surface Vessel) Mk.II 'Yagi' aerials (D) on the forward outer wing struts of a Swordfish Mk.II or III – (note the smooth metal skinned lower mainplane under surfaces and the larger oil cooler (E) on the forward starboard side). The ASV equipment allowed the aircraft to locate surface ships at night or through clouds. The aircraft is also fitted with Light Series Carriers under the wings.

INTO SERVICE



Above: Swordfish Mk.I, K5933 from the first production batch, in the overall Aluminium (silver) paint scheme over the fabric covered areas with Cerrux Grey painted metal panels, which became the type's pre-camouflage standard scheme. K5933 was issued to 825 NAS, but collided with K5976 when making a night approach to HMS Glorious off Alexandria, Egypt, on 30 January 1939. All six airmen were killed.

Left: Four Swordfish Mk.Is of the Torpedo Training Unit, based at RAF Gosport, circa late 1937/early 1938. They are K5956 'K'; K8875 'A'; K8873 '3' and L7650 '1'. Originally established as 'A' Torpedo Training Flight, it was re-designated as the Torpedo Training Unit (TTU) in February 1936. Its primary role was to train aircrew for torpedo bomber aircraft for both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm. The unit was mainly equipped with Fairey Swordfish, but also operated Blackburn Sharks, Bristol Beauforts and Blackburn Bothas.



Above: Swordfish Mk.I, K5950, '62' of 812 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), being hoisted by a crane in 1938. The aircraft is marked with a two-digit Fleet Number (62 in black) over the then recently introduced Aircraft Carrier Identification Band, which is yellow - identifying HMS Glorious. Note how the Aircraft Carrier Identification Band is angled and truncated along the fuselage lower longeron line. The Fleet Number '62' is repeated under both tips of the top mainplane. The squadron badge, a golden flying fish over a green sea, within a black circle, was also carried on both sides of the fin.

Upper Right: Another of HMS Glorious' Swordfish Mk.Is, K5979, '74', but this time with wheeled undercarriage fitted. The two-digit Fleet Number (74) is again applied over the yellow Aircraft Carrier Identification Band, and this aircraft also carries the 812 NAS badge on both sides of the fin.

Right: Another formation shot, in echelon to starboard this time, of five Swordfish Mk.Is, of the Torpedo Training Unit, including K8425 'E'; K8874 'K'; K8872 'H'; K8424 'D'; K8348 'C', based at RAF Gosport, circa late 1937/early 1938.



Right: Swordfish Mk.I, K8350, from the second production batch, coded '50' of either A Flight or C Flight of the Floatplane Training Unit (FTU) also based at Gosport, circa 1937. Of interest is the dark colour of the Townend ring and the wheel hubs which may have been red, possibly indicating A Flight? Also, as with the fuselage numbers of other TTU Swordfish (see later), the individual aircraft numeral '50' was possibly taken from the 'last two' of the serial number.

Below: Swordfish Mk.I, K5942, marked with the three-digit Fleet Number '968', of 825 NAS, over the HMS Courageous blue Aircraft Carrier Identification Band, after a heavy landing (maybe at Roborough) on 17 September 1939. As with all the preceding photos of Swordfish, the national markings were applied in the pre-war Bright Red and Bright Blue shades. The black dot (arrowed) is the oil filler cap.



Above: Another shot of K8872 'H' of the Torpedo Training Unit, taken circa late 1937/early 1938. K8872 crashed when flying on a torpedo attack training exercise from RAF Abbotsinch, Glasgow, on 17 May 1940 when it fell into the sea off Lady Isle in the Firth of Clyde. Its pilot, Sgt Bell was killed.

Above right: Swordfish Mk.I, K8447, '75' of 812 NAS, photographed at Mersa Matruh, Egypt, circa 1938. Note Fleet Number '75' on a diagonal yellow Aircraft Carrier Identification Band (HMS Glorious) and the squadron badge on the fin.

Right: Another Swordfish Mk.I, K8346, '46', (again note the individual aircraft numeral '46' taken from the 'last two' of the serial number), of either A Flight or C Flight of the Floatplane Training Unit (FTU) based at Gosport, circa 1937, but this time fitted with the dual control cockpit and floats.



CARRIER STRIPES



At the time the Swordfish entered Fleet Air Arm service, the Royal Navy was applying two types of recognition features to its aircraft – a two, or three, digit 'Fleet Number' which identified the individual aircraft, and was carried on the fuselage sides, and often repeated under the tips of the upper mainplane. Plus, on carrier-based aircraft, a system of coloured 'Aircraft Carrier Identification Bands', was applied around the aircraft's mid-fuselage section, identifying the carrier the aircraft was operating from. The 'Fleet Numbers' were invariably applied over the Carrier Identification Band(s), in white numerals over 'dark' bands and black numerals over 'light' bands.

Each coloured band (or in the case of HMS Ark Royal, three bands), identified the parent carrier.

Illustrations at right:

- 1) HMS Courageous – Blue
- 2) HMS Glorious – Yellow
- 3) HMS Furious – Red
- 4) HMS Eagle – Black
- 5) HMS Hermes – Green
- 6) HMS Ark Royal – Blue-Red-Blue

Two new aircraft carriers, still under construction at the time, HMS Illustrious – which was allocated Black-Green-Black bands and HMS Victorious which was allocated Red-Black-Red bands, but this system had changed before they entered service.

Occasionally coloured bands or 'flashes' were applied horizontally along the fuselage, either side of the Carrier Identification Band, which were probably Flight markings.

Squadron Commanders' and Flight Leaders' aircraft were further identified by coloured fins, either covering the whole fin area or in bands or checks. Coloured span-wise bands were also sometimes applied on the upper surface of the top mainplane, or in a 'square' on the top mainplane centre section. The squadron badge, invariably in a Standard Naval (Battleship) Frame, was applied to the fin too, sometimes within a black circle, or on a white background. Evidence also suggests that the engine's Townend ring cowling was often painted in Flight colours along with wheel hubs.

Swordfish Mk.I, L9781, of 820 NAS, with white Fleet Number '650' on a Blue-Red-Blue Aircraft Carrier Identification Band, banking over its parent ship, HMS Ark Royal, on its spring cruise in the Mediterranean in early 1939. Being a late L series aircraft, it has landing lights in the leading edges of both lower wings (arrowed). The Townend ring cowling could be in a Flight colour.





Previous page: Oh for colour film on this occasion!

12 K-series Swordfish of 823 NAS over HMS Glorious probably in 1937. All appear to have the yellow diagonal stripe but that's where the similarities end. All have the black (?) upper decking apart from K5946 in the foreground. Many have the engine Townend ring painted, most in a dark colour but the lead appears to be in white. Several fins are painted in a dark colour and three have stripes on them, notably the leaders of a section. Wheel hubs are also likely to have been painted.

Top right: Swordfish Mk.I, K5972, '804' that is in the photo opposite leading the rear section. Interestingly, in this page's photo it has gained more stripes on the fin and lost the dark coloured Townend ring. The yellow stripe is darker in this photo because of the type of film used.

Right: Another aircraft from the main photo, K5970 '814' can be seen on the starboard side of the lead section. Note that the 814 is not outlined in white, but '804' above is.

