

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



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Wings Over Water

BAE SYSTEMS

Founding partner





Sopwith 2F1 Camel

1917–1921

The Sopwith 2F1, known as the Ship's Camel, had a rear fuselage that, unlike the standard aircraft, could be detached to save space on board ships. One of the two Vickers guns of the land-based variant was omitted, and a Lewis Gun was fitted to some Camels.

The 2F1 made the first ever aircraft carrier-based attack when seven aircraft took off from HMS Furious to attack Zeppelin airship sheds at the German Navy's base at Tondern, Denmark on 17 July 1918. The Camel represented here took part in operations against Bolshevik forces in the Baltic during 1919.

72/M/582



Felixstowe F2A

1917–1923

F2A flying boats were able to remain airborne for over nine hours and cover vast distances. They were used to patrol the North Sea to search for enemy submarines or airships and, on a number of occasions, successfully attacking those they found.

67/M/538



Fairey Campania

1917–1920

The Campania was the first British aircraft to be designed specifically for operations from a carrier vessel. It took its name from the converted passenger liner from which it was designed to operate.

67/M/1255



Sopwith Cuckoo

1917–1923

The Cuckoo was the first land-based torpedo bomber operated by the RAF. Its wide wings could be folded to the rear, aiding operations from aircraft carriers.

66/M/5



Supermarine Southampton

1925–1936

The Southampton was the longest-serving flying boat between the First and Second World Wars. It found fame through a series of long-distance formation flights which took them as far afield as Australia. Originally built with a wooden hull, this was replaced in the second production version by one of metal construction. In 1967 the wooden hull of a Southampton, which had been adapted as a houseboat, was recovered by the RAF Museum. The restoration project took 11 years, and the fuselage can now be seen in Hangar 4.

72/M/346



Parnall Panther

1919–1926

The Panther was a reconnaissance aircraft with a plywood fuselage. It was equipped with hooks on the undercarriage, which would catch on arrester wires to help it land on aircraft carriers.

72/M/345



Westland Walrus

1921–1925

The Walrus was a spotter-reconnaissance aircraft based heavily on the Airco DH9A, for which Westland Aircraft had the design authority. The large bulge under the fuselage enabled a crew member to observe ships below.

69/M/570



Nieuport Nightjar

1922–1924

After the RAF's Nieuport Nighthawk fighter failed due to its ABC Dragonfly engine, the Gloucestershire Aircraft Company bought the stock of airframes and adapted the design to produce a series of aircraft named the Gloucester Mars. The Mars X, using a tried and tested Bentley BR2 rotary engine, was adopted as the Nightjar carrier-borne fighter. It had a short service career but was deployed to Turkey during the Chanak crisis of 1922.

68/M/325



Blackburn Iris Mk III

1930–1934

The Iris was the RAF's largest aircraft at the time it entered service and only carried the equipment of a single squadron. Irises undertook a number of long-range flights including the first non-stop flight by an RAF aircraft between the UK and Iceland.

68/M/92



Avro Bison Mk II

1921–1929

A carrier-borne fleet-spotting aircraft, the Bison had a generous enclosed cabin with large windows, allowing the observers some level of comfort while undertaking their duties.

67/M/985



Supermarine Seagull III

1923–1925

The Seagull could take off from, and land on, an aircraft carrier or airfield. With its wheels retracted, it could also operate from the water.

71/M/489



Short S8/8 Rangoon

1931–1936

Based on the civilian Calcutta flying boat, the Rangoon saw service in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, carrying out surveys and anti-smuggling patrols.

68/M/800



Blackburn Dart

1923–1935

The Dart was the first of a line of carrier-based torpedo-carrying aircraft supplied to the Fleet Air Arm by the Blackburn Aircraft and Motor Co. Ltd. In 1926 a Dart became the first aircraft to land on a carrier at night.

70/M/951



Fairey Flycatcher

1923–1934

The Flycatcher was the standard fighter aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm during the 1920s. It was remembered fondly by those who flew it, for its ease of handling and aerobatic performance.

71/M/488



Supermarine Scapa

1933–1938

Originally known as the Southampton IV, the Scapa was a major redesign of the earlier flying boat. Scapas serving in the Mediterranean flew patrols during the Spanish Civil War to ensure the safety of neutral shipping.

68/M/293



Fairey III D

1924–1930

The Fairey III D saw widespread use with the Fleet Air Arm as a land and carrier-based spotter aircraft. It became, in its seaplane form, the first British aircraft to be launched by catapult from a ship in 1925.

68/M/804



Blackburn Ripon Mk IIA

1929–1934

The Ripon replaced the single seat Blackburn Dart in the torpedo bomber role. It carried two crew and could travel twice as far.

70/M/952



Fairey III F

1928–1936

The Fairey III F is unusual as it served the Fleet Air Arm as a carrier-borne reconnaissance aircraft and float plane as well as with the regular RAF as a light bomber and general purpose aircraft. During the early 1930s, the III F was used to pioneer the arrester hook as an aid to landing on aircraft carriers – a system that is still in use to this day.

67/M/91

Blackburn Perth

1934–1936



Replacing the Blackburn Iris, and built in similarly small numbers to its predecessor, the Perth flying boats of No. 209 Squadron spent most of their short service lives patrolling British waters and conducting joint exercises with the Royal Navy.

68/M/91

Hawker Osprey I

1932–1944



Closely related to the RAF's Hawker Hart, the Osprey served as the Fleet Air Arm's standard fighter and reconnaissance aircraft of the 1930s. Despite being declared obsolete in 1940, it continued to serve in a number of second-line roles.

72/M/312



Hawker Nimrod II

1932–1939

The Nimrod was the Fleet Air Arm's equivalent of the RAF's Hawker Fury fighter. During early production an arrester hook was added to the airframe to shorten landing runs on carriers.

71/M/487



Short Singapore Mk III

1935–1941

The Singapore enjoyed one of the larger production runs for flying boats between the First and Second World Wars. It was used in the Middle and Far East as well as over British waters. It had the unusual feature of employing both pusher and puller engines to provide power.

68/M/427



Blackburn Shark Mk I

1935–1944

Built as a private venture, the Shark was the last of Blackburn's biplane torpedo bombers. Although it retired from its main role in 1938, the Shark continued to offer valuable service as a training aircraft until the mid 1940s.

71/M/915



Supermarine Stranraer

1937–1941

The Stranraer was the last of a line of twin-engine biplane flying boats to see service with the RAF. It was designed by R J Mitchell, better known for his work on both the S5 and S6 Schneider trophy winning seaplanes and the Supermarine Spitfire.

65/M/846



Supermarine Walrus I

1934–1945

Originally entering service with the Royal Australian Air Force as the Seagull V, the RAF adopted the design for use with the Fleet Air Arm and renamed it the Walrus. After the Royal Navy took control of the Fleet Air Arm, the RAF retained the Walrus for air sea rescue duties.

66/M/914

Fairey Swordfish Mk III

1936–1953



The Swordfish is remembered for its role in the Second World War, after the Fleet Air Arm had returned to the control of the Royal Navy. In 1940 Swordfish destroyed the Italian Fleet at the port of Taranto and in 1941 they disabled the German battleship Bismarck. In 1942, a Victoria Cross was posthumously awarded to Fleet Air Arm pilot Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde for his heroic attempt to prevent German battleships from moving up the English Channel.

However, 1939 did not see the last of the RAF's association with the Swordfish. In 1945 radar-equipped Swordfish of No. 119 Squadron undertook anti-shipping patrols over the North Sea.

71/M/214