

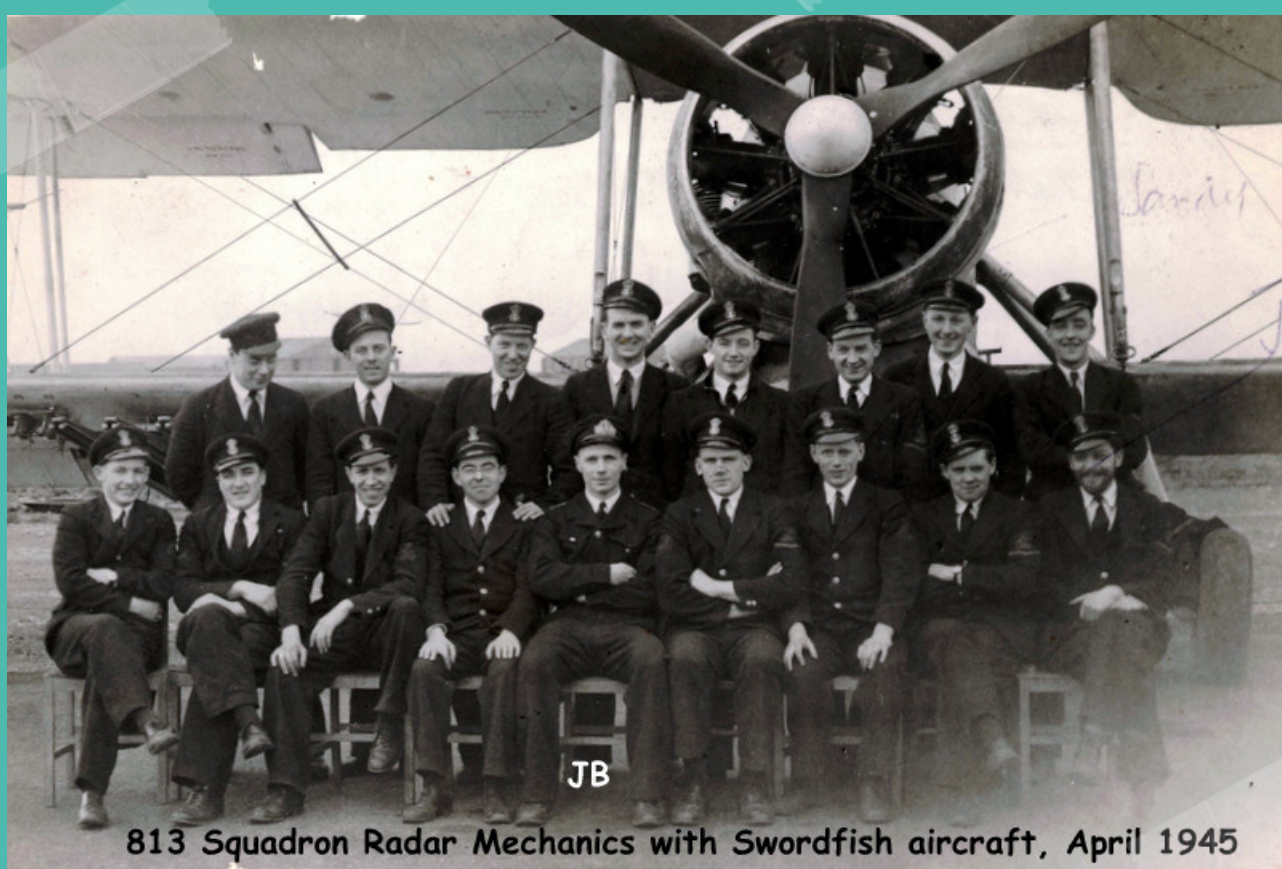
THE FLEET AIR ARM on ARCTIC CONVOYS

During WW2 the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) became the Air Branch of the Royal Navy. Pilots operated fighters, torpedo bombers and reconnaissance aircraft and played an important role, notably in the sinking of the Bismarck, and in Operation Tungsten against the Tirpitz. They also provided crucial cover for the convoys to Russia.

Naval Air Squadrons Active in the Arctic

700 NAS	832 NAS	883 NAS
802 NAS	833 NAS	885 NAS
811 NAS	835 NAS	1832 NAS
813 NAS	842 NAS	
816 NAS	846 NAS	
819 NAS	853 NAS	
822 NAS	856 NAS	
824 NAS	882 NAS	

Below: HMS Nairana



813 Squadron Radar Mechanics with Swordfish aircraft, April 1945

John vividly recalled that Swordfish planes often missed their return landing in the intense cold and dark. Crew members were frequently lost as planes ditched into sea.

John Boothroyd's role with 813 Squadron was a Radar Mechanic/Swordfish Observer with responsibility for maintaining radar equipment and radio communications for the Swordfish aircraft on HMS Campania and HMS Vindex.



The conditions weathered by RA64 were reported to be the worst endured in the entire North Atlantic theatre. The convoy was hit by two hurricanes. HMS Campania rolled 45 degrees each way and equipment and men were flung in all directions. There was concern about leaking fuel from motors and other equipment that had been upended. It was a harrowing experience.



Escort Carrier in a gale

In 1944 HMS Campania was carrying Fairey Swordfish, Wildcats, and Fulmar NF II Night Fighters



Peter Thomas Brown - Rank
Chief Petty Officer Air Artificer
813 Squadron

...his engineering skills were soon put to very good use, trying to keep the ship's planes airworthy. He often joked that the pilots used to crash-land them deliberately just to keep his team on their toes!

Those convoys survived 90mph winds, huge seas, dive bombers, and torpedo attacks from enemy U-Boats. But he said the most frightening thing was having his pilots take him on test flights in the planes that HE had just fixed!!!

Sub Lieutenant Eric Jardine 813 Squadron

Eric was a Swordfish pilot based on HMS Campania.
He flew on many sorties braving the horrific conditions knowing a ditching far from the carrier would probably be fatal.



Below: HMS Campania



A Swordfish pilot awaiting orders

813 Squadron in icy conditions



Operation Tungsten

A Royal Navy air raid that targeted
KMS Tirpitz

The Tirpitz posed a threat to the Arctic convoys and so the operation aimed to damage or destroy her in her base at Kaafjord.

The raid took place on 3rd April 1944



The Tirpitz

The main striking force included:
827, 830, 829, and 831 Squadrons, which were supported by a large number of warships.

15 bombs struck the Tirpitz, and the crew suffered heavy casualties. Nevertheless, the ship did not sink, and by mid-July was repaired.



HMS Fencer in April 1944

HMS Fencer provided anti-submarine cover for Operation 'TUNGSTEN'

For this operation 842 Squadron was embarked with 12 Swordfish II and 8 Wildcat IV



A Wildcat crash beyond the barrier on HMS Fencer



Swordfish from HMS Fencer sank the U-boats U277, U674, and U959 on convoy RA59

A Swordfish airplane on HMS Fencer (Kola Inlet - May 1944), with British and Russian Matelots



853 Squadron served on HMS Tracker

All the Petty Officers of 853 Sqdn. Photo taken in Russia



811 Squadron served on HMS Vindex

George Young 811 Squadron

George's role was that of deck hand and one time when they were on standby to receive aircraft he says: 'I came up on the wrong side of the flight deck and had to crawl along the deck on hands and knees holding onto the trip wire as the deck was so icy.'



853 and 811 Squadrons both provided air cover for convoy RA61. While on HMS Tracker, 853 Squadron made 136 deck landings, 19 of them at night.



HMS Vindex



835 Squadron mechanics en-route to Murmansk on HMS Nairana

Towards the end of 1944 HMS Nairana was based at Scapa and they did 3 return convoys to Murmansk (Vayenga) – JW61, 62 & 64 and RA61, 62 & 64. HMS Nairana made history by flying a fighter at night.



Bob Selley, 835 Squadron

U-boats Sunk by the FAA in Arctic Waters

- U366, Swordfish, 816 sqdn, HMS Chaser 5/3/44
- U973, Swordfish, 816 sqdn, HMS Chaser 6/3/44
- U288, Swordfish, 819 sqdn, HMS Activity/Avengers, 846 sqn, HMS Tracker 3/4/44
- U277, Swordfish, 842 sqdn, HMS Fencer 1/5/44
- U674, Swordfish, 842 sqdn, HMS Fencer, 2/5/44
- U959, Swordfish, 842 sqdn, HMS Fencer, 2/5/44
- U354, Swordfish, 825 sqdn, HMS Vindex, 25/8/44
- U921, Swordfish, 813 sqdn, HMS Campania, 30/9/44
- U365, Swordfish, 813 sqdn, HMS Campania, 13/12/44



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and stories shared by veterans or
their relatives.

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#CONVOYS REMEMBERED

