

Missions for America

*Semper vigilans!*  
*Semper volans!*



## The Coastwatcher

Newsletter of the Thames River Composite Squadron  
GON  
Connecticut Wing  
Civil Air Patrol

<http://capct075.web.officelive.com/default.aspx>

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### SCHEDULE OF COMING EVENTS

05 NOV-TRCS Rifle/Submarine Museum  
06 NOV-Women Take Flight-NE Air Museum  
08 NOV-TRCS Meeting  
11-13 NOV-Great Starts Weekend Encampment  
15 NOV-TRCS Meeting  
18 NOV-USCG Observatory Open House  
22 NOV-Cadet AHI Training  
29 NOV-Third Annual TRCS Bowling Tourney

### ANNUAL CITRUS FRUIT FUNDRAISER

LAST WEEK LAST WEEK



**THIS IS THE LAST WEEK TO SELL FRUIT**

### CADET MEETING NOTES

01 November, 2011

submitted by

C/Capt Brendan Flynn

New cadets practiced basic drill. Experienced cadets practiced columns and columns of files.

C/SrAmn Ray taught a DDR class on Heroin which discussed the appearance, nicknames, effects, dangers, and the poppy plant source.

Capt Wojtcuk reminded cadets about the November 29<sup>th</sup> bowling tournament. The event will be held at Norwich Family Entertainment on West Town Street between 1800 and 2000.

New cadets were reminded that if they are going to wear their new uniforms, make sure it has all the patches and insignia on it.

Cadets who attend the Great Start Encampment should bring sleeping bag, towels, and washcloth. If you don't have BDU's, bring jeans and t-shirts. Bring your CAP study material, a notebook, and pens/pencils. Write your name on everything. Do not bring knives, watches, or electronics.

New cadets should complete OPSEC, EO, and Introduction to Safety by the next meeting.

Maj Rocketto announced that a field trip will be conducted to the Submarine Forces Museum and *USS Nautilus* on Saturday morning and a rifle safety and marksmanship session will be conducted afterwards. Details will be sent in a special e-mail. Pre-registration is required. See accompanying article.

The New England Air Museum will hold a "Women in Flight" program on Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>. See the accompanying article.

C/SMSGT Drew Daniels received his rocketry badge. C/Capt Flynn and cadets Paquin, Chartier, Schultz, VanDevander, Bourque, and Ray received

certificates for rocketry achievements at the prizes. Commander's Cup competition.

Capt Noniewicz announced that due to power outages from the storm, Wednesday's CAC and Commander's Call have been cancelled.

### **C/CAPT FLYNN RECEIVES EARHART EAKER PLAQUE AT CTWG CONFERENCE**



Thames River's C/Capt Brandon Flynn received his Amelia Earhart Award at ceremonies held at the CTWG Conference Reception, New England Air Museum.



*Col Mary Feik presents Earhart Plaque to C/Capt Flynn in front of Lockheed 10A Electra, the same type of aircraft which she and Fred Noonan flew on their last flight.*

### **SUBMARINE MUSEUM/RIFLE CLINIC DOUBLE HEADER**

On Saturday, 05 November, the Silver City and Thames River Composite Squadrons are invited to participate in a two part event. The day will start at 0900 with a tour of both the USS Nautilus, the first nuclear submarine and the Submarine Force Museum. Cadets will participate in a scavenger hunt at the site, answering questions on various exhibits. The high scoring cadets will be awarded



*USS Nautilus and Submarine Forces Museum as Seen from an Aircraft*

The squadrons will then adjourn to the Quaker Hill Rod and Gun Club where they will have lunch and view and illustrated program entitled "Aircraft and Submarines: Similarities, Differences, and Historical Relationships."

Afterwards, a rifle safety and marksmanship clinic will be conducted during which cadets may earn credit towards badges which may be worn on their uniforms.

Cadets who have limited time may select only one of the programs.

Uniform for the day is BDUs. Cadets should bring their own lunches and a sweatshirt. The usual documentation is also required.

### **USCGA OBSERVATORY OPEN HOUSE**

The make-up date for the USCG Academy Observatory Open House is Friday, 18 November from sundown until 2200.

### **"WOMEN TAKE FLIGHT" EVENT AT NEAM**

On November 6<sup>th</sup>, the New England Air Museum will host a special event focused on women in aviation. CAP icon Col Mary Feik will be a featured presenter as will NASA astronaut, Susan Still Kilrain.

## SENIOR MEETING

01 November, 2011

No training was planned. Attendees worked on individual projects.

### AEROSPACE CURRENT EVENTS

#### *Advanced Weather Satellite Launched*

A Delta II rocket from Vandenberg AFB lifted the new National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) into a near circular orbit last week. The new satellite carries the suite of the next generation sensors which will improve weather predictions and provide more precise data for meteorologists and climatologists.

#### *What Goes Around Comes Around*

Fifty years after deactivating its last blimp, the US Navy has returned to manned lighter than air flight. A modified American Blimp Corporation A-170 airship, designated by the navy as an MZ-3A will fly for the US Naval Research Laboratory as part of Scientific Development Squadron One (VXS-1) at Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Md.



(Naval Research Laboratory photo)

Based at Lakehurst, N.J., the 178 foot long blimp is powered by two 180 HP and has a 12 hour flight duration. She will be employed to support the development of Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems. Both the US Army and the USAF are also also involved with lighter-than-air vehicle research and operational use.

#### *Balloons which Go Up, Come Down*

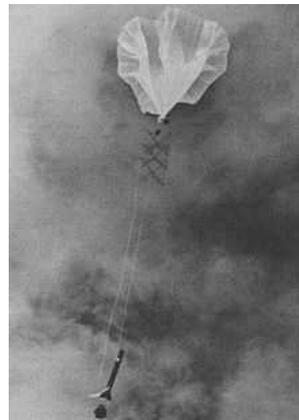
JP Aerospace, a group of volunteer aero enthusiasts who work on a shoestring budget have successfully launched an unmanned powered airship to an altitude of 18 miles, about 95,000 feet.



*Tandem lifts off in Nevada*

(JP Aerospace photo)

The vehicle, name *Tandem*, is planned to be the launch platform for another vehicle which will be sent into space. The use of balloons for launching rockets is not new, Back in the 1950s, NASA and the Office of Naval Research found that using a balloon to loft a small solid state rocket such as a Loki or Deacon above the thick lower atmosphere was a relatively cheap way to obtain atmospheric data at altitude. The combination of balloon and rocket were known as a “rockoon.”



*A variant of the Deacon is lifted aloft by a balloon*

*Tandem* was launched from the Black Rock Desert in Nevada. The vehicle is a truss, about 30 feet long, supported by a balloon at each end. Two electric motors spin six foot props which enable a ground operator to maneuver the ship.

The flight ended when one balloon burst. The second balloon was released and a parachute was deployed to safely recover the ship.

Ultimately, JP hopes to equip one of their lifting ships with a rocket capable of entering space.

### *Student Chances to “Get High” Balloon*

NASA has been running a high altitude balloon program for over 50 years and operates the Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility in Palestine, Texas.

In an effort to create student interest in aerospace careers, NASA is offering a free ride to the edge of space for a dozen student designed experiments,

The High Altitude Scientific Platform is a small balloon equipped with a specially designed mechanical, power, and communications interface and will be made available to those whose applications are accepted by a panel of judges.

## AVIATION HISTORY

### NOVEMBER FEATURE ARTICLE

#### **Prelude to Pearl: Torpedo Attack at Taranto Operation Judgement 11-12 November, 1940**

##### *Strategic Situation*

Great Britain had been engaged in hostilities with Germany since September 3, 1939. In May of 1940, the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from the beaches of Dunquerque and within a month, Italy declared war on both Great Britain and France. The French government collapsed and, a collaborationist government under Marshal Philippe Petain signed an armistice treaty.

In the Mediterranean Sea, the Royal Navy found itself in a precarious position. Italian troops, on the Libyan-Egyptian border, menaced the Suez Canal, Great Britain's lifeline to India and its Pacific empire. The Italians had a modern and strong fleet which threatened British convoys passing from Gibraltar to Suez. This meant that the British supply lines to their army in Egypt and from their Asian colonies might be choked off.

Admiral Andrew Cunningham, Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet had to not only protect the supply lines but protect his bases at Gibraltar, Malta, and Alexandria. At the same time, he had to interdict the Italian supply lines to Italy's African army.



*A map of the Mediterranean showing the relationships of the important bases.*

To accomplish this task, Cunningham had a fleet which varied with the fortunes of war. The Royal Navy was stretched thin with major units facing the Germans in the Atlantic and guarding the outpost of empire in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. As the need arose, ships would be shifted to areas where they might be needed.

Around the middle of 1940, Cunningham had five older battleships, the majority of which had chronic engineering problems, three aircraft carriers, ten cruisers, 33 destroyers, and handful of submarines.

He faced an Italian fleet composed of six modern battleships, eighteen cruisers, around 60 destroyers, and over 100 submarines. The ships were stylish and fast, not surpassing for a nation which produced the Bugatti, Maserati, and Ferrari racing stables. The Italian naval command, the *Supermarina*, referred to the Mediterranean as *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea), and only planned to operate there so their ships were short ranged. They also had not constructed any aircraft carriers but they had a large land based force of aircraft ideally located to cover the central Mediterranean. Some support was also offered by German submarines.

In addition, after the collapse of France, there was a constant fear that the powerful French Mediterranean Fleet would be employed by the Germans and their French collaborators. That issue was resolved when the French ships in Alexandria were interned and the vessels in the French colonies of Algeria and Senegal were neutralized by British bombardments from the sea in July of 1940.

### *The People, Plans, and Planes*

Successful missions are oft a blend of visionary planners, hard intelligence, well practiced and experienced operators, deception, and a modicum of good fortune. The planning for the Taranto raid can be traced back to 1935 when the Italians invaded Abyssinia and Mussolini's dreams of a new "Roman Empire" dominating the Mediterranean Basin were developing. Admiral

Dudley Pound, then Chief of Staff of the British Mediterranean Fleet, ordered his planners to draw up a set of contingency plans for attacking the Italian Fleet while it was at anchor at Taranto. The cooling of war fever relegated the plans to some secure depository but in 1938, Pound, now Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet, ordered Captain Arthur Lumley St. George Lyster, commander of *HMS Glorious*, an old aircraft carrier which had been converted from a World War I battlecruiser.

*Admiral Lyster*  
(Credit Imperial War Museum)



Lyster had served at Taranto during World War I when Italy had been allied with Great Britain. He revised the original plan and developed a rigorous training schedule for this aircrews including the unusual, for that time, carrier night operations. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, was just returning from Munich with Herr Hitler's written pledge of "peace in our times" so the plan was again shelved.

A year later, the Nazis invaded Poland and World War II commenced in Europe. Nine months after, Lyster became a Rear Admiral in charge of British carriers in the Med. He flew his flag from a new carrier, *HMS Illustrious*. By good fortune, some of the aircrew were former *Glorious* aviators who had been trained for a possible night torpedo attack against Taranto two years earlier. Lyster presented the revised plan to Admiral Cunningham and the plan was approved as *Operation Judgement*.

As originally conceived, the attack would be launched from two carriers, *Illustrious* and *HMS Eagle*. Some thirty Fairey Swordfish, the total complement of both ships would be used. The Swordfish was a biplane, with a crew of two or three, first flown in 1934! Known as "the Stringbag," the plane was obsolete by 1940 but was one of the few resources left to the hard pressed Fleet Air Arm. She could carry a single torpedo or a 1500 pound bomb load at about 100 knots for about 475 nautical miles.



*"Stringbag" and an  
18 inch torpedo*

The date of the attack was to be October 21, 1940, the anniversary of Nelson's defeat of the combined French and Spanish Fleets off Cape Trafalgar during the Napoleonic Wars but bad luck intervened. The British decided to replace the third crewman with an auxiliary fuel tank. While the *Eagle's* artificers were installing the tank on one of the aircraft, a fire broke out and two aircraft were destroyed. Then an engineering breakdown forced the withdrawal of *HMS Eagle*. *Illustrious* then took on five of *Eagle's* Swordfish but the attack force was reduced to only twenty-two aircraft.

*HMS Illustrious under steam with a deck load of Swordfish and one Fulmar*

(Henri Le Masson Collection)



Aerial reconnaissance of Taranto had been carried out by an asset which had its origin in Middle River, Maryland, home of Glenn Martin Aircraft. Three Martin Model 167 light bombers whose British appellation was "Maryland" were used to keep track of Italian Fleet movements. The Maryland had been the loser to the Douglas A-20 Havoc in an attack bomber competition for a US Army Air Force contract but almost 500 had been sold to other nations. She was fast and equipped with not only a dorsal turret but four forward firing machine guns in the wings.



*Maryland in Flight*

The final reconnaissance was flown by Adrian Warburton. Warburton habitually sought out risky operations and had the unusual distinction of being the only bomber pilot to be ranked as an ace. He had used the forward firing machine guns of his bomber to shoot down five enemy aircraft! On the night of November 11<sup>th</sup>, he departed Malta and flew repeated passes over the harbor, verifying the location of six Italian battleships.

In order to not only divert the Italian defenses but also to move supplies through the Mediterranean, the British organized a large scale deception operation designed to swamp the Italian intelligence offices with so much information that they would be paralyzed and unable to react effectively. Three naval forces were to sortie at the same time. One from Gibraltar, one from Alexandria, and a reinforcement squadron already en route from Gibraltar to Alexandria. A freighter convoy from Alexandria would split and take supplies to Malta and Greece, which the Italians had just invaded. A second convoy carrying fuel would also depart Alexandria for Greece. The other two convoys consisted of empty freighters, returning to Alexandria from Malta and the Aegean Sea. At some point, one group of Royal Navy ships would enter the Adriatic and attack Italian shipping while a second would hold position near Crete. The last squadron, consisting of the *Illustrious*, four cruisers and four destroyers would deliver the attack aircraft within range of Taranto on the night of November 11<sup>th</sup>.

But again, two days before the raid, bad luck again intervened for the British. Contaminated fuel led to the loss of two of the Swordfish, reducing their number to twenty. This was countered by some good luck. The Italian barrage balloons which were used to prevent and even down low flying aircraft were ranged to the east and west of the fleet anchorage. However on November 9<sup>th</sup>, a storm had damaged 60 out of 90 and they were not replaced due to a shortage of hydrogen. Moreover, in order to facilitate the easy movement

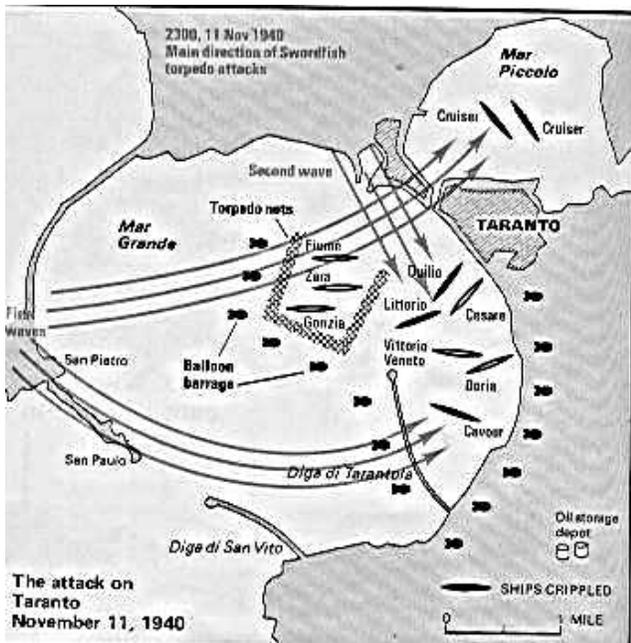
of the battleships, only one-third of the anti torpedo nets were installed. Finally, although complex plans often go awry, the complicated set of ship movements went off without any problems and Italian intelligence failed to perceive the primary objective of the British.

### The Attack

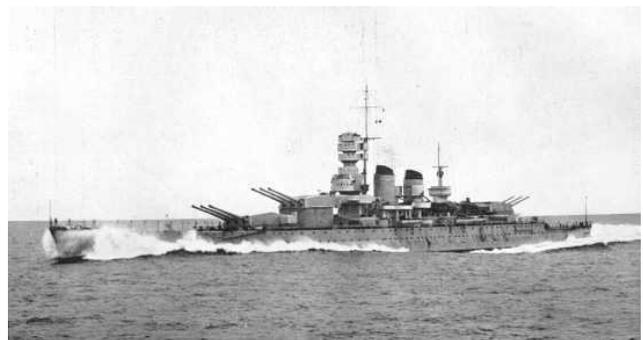
The attack was organized in two waves. Around 9 P.M., twelve Swordfish departed *Illustrious*, bound for Taranto. In order to split the aircraft defenses, half the aircraft would attack from the west and the second element would come in from the northwest. Six aircraft carried torpedos, four carried six semi-armor piercing 250 pound bombs, and two carried four 250 pounder sand 16 flares. The flare ships would dispense their flares at half mile intervals over land around the eastern side of the large harbor, silhouetting the Italian ships for the torpedo planes. They would then bomb the ships, dockyard, and fuel farm.

Although the Italians did not have radar, sound detectors were employed to warn of approaching aircraft. Around 11 P.M., the sound of aircraft was heard to the west and the Italian defenses came alive but lacked any fire discipline. Shore batteries of 10 cm A-A guns, 20 and 37 mm cannons, and over 100 machine guns joined the 600 ack-ack guns on the ships. Streams of tracers, and flak bursts laced the sky over the anchorage even before any aircraft had been sighted.

The first attacker and the only casualty in the first wave was the lead aircraft manned by Lt. Commander Williamson and Lt. Scarlett but they successfully put their torpedo in the battleship *RM Conte di Cavour* before being shot down. Both survived but were taken prisoner. In succession, the rest of the torpedo planes bored in. The next two aircraft missed but the torpedo from the fourth Swordfish pen a 1,500 square foot hole in another battleship, the *RM Littorio*. The next two aircraft managed to score another hit on the *Littorio*. The four aircraft carrying bombs struck at the facilities and ships in the inner harbor. Most of the bombs failed to strike their targets and some which did, failed to explode! However, the seaplane base was struck and a large explosion observed. Ten Swordfish then headed back to the *Illustrious*.



Sketch of the Harbor at Taranto Diagramming the Plan of the Attack  
(Fleet Air Arm Archive)



The Regia Marina's Littorio Displaying Its Nine Fifteen Inch Guns.

The second wave adopted different tactics, coming in en masse from the northwest and then turning southward. But they got off to a bad start. Two planes were involved in a deck collision during positioning. One managed to get off but the other had torn fabric and two broken ribs in the wing. The crew of the damaged aircraft, a Lts Clifford and Going had “press on” attitudes, which the British might refer to as “keen.” They had their aircraft taken below for repairs. The maintenance personnel, in twenty minutes, repaired both ribs, replaced and doped the fabric, and got the aircraft back on deck where Clifford and Going wheedled permission to take-off and try to catch up with their squadron mates. While this was going on, one of the dispatched aircraft, a bomber, returned because their auxiliary fuel tank had unshipped.

As midnight approached, the second wave started its run-in. The two flare droppers illuminated the harbor and bombed the fuel dumps as the five torpedo planes selected their targets. The wave leader, Lt. Commander Hale was first in and his torpedo was the third to strike the *Littorio*. The second aircraft was shot down and the crew killed. The third aircraft put its torpedo into the battleship *RM Caio Duilio* but the fourth and fifth aircraft either missed or launched defective torpedoes. As the seven aircraft withdrew, the eager Lts Clifford and Going arrived on the scene 24 minutes late. They selected the cruiser *RM Trento*, moored in the inner harbor and dropped salvoed their bombs, one of which stuck, holed the deck, but failed to explode. This was the last aircraft to return from Taranto. A follow-up raid, planned for the next night, was cancelled due to unfavorable weather.

#### *Aftermath of the Raid*

The human losses in the raid were surprisingly light. The British lost two aircraft. Two crewmen were captured and two killed. Italian casualties totaled forty. But the success of the torpedo attack radically changed the strategic naval situation in the Mediterranean.

As the dawn broke over the oil glazed harbors, three Italian battleships lay disabled. The *Duilio* had been beached and out of the war for six months. The *Littorio*, struck by three torpedoes but a massive effort by the shipyards got her back in service in five months. The *Cavour*, her decks awash, was never returned to wartime service. The cruiser *Trento*, struck by a bomb which failed to explode, required months to get back into service and the destroyers *Libeccio* and *Pessagno* were severely damaged by near misses. The seaplane base burned for over 12 hours.



*The Harbor After the Raid.*  
*The three damaged battleships are clearly visible.*  
(K.Bastard/RAF PRU)

Assessing the damages, the Italian Supermarina decided to move the surviving battleships north to Naples. This movement placed them in a far less advantageous position to interdict Mediterranean convoys and was a major strategic victory produced by the raid. British domination of the Italian *Mare Nostrum* was established.

The raid proved that contrary to naval belief, torpedoes could be used effectively in shallow water. The British had dropped from a very low

altitude and slow speed which prevented the torpedoes from diving into the mud. They also set them to arm for a short run, some 300 yards, and equipped them with both contact and magnetic detonators.

### *A Naval Officer Arrives from Berlin*

A few days after the raid, Lt. Commander Naito Takeshi, Japan's Assistant Naval Attache in Berlin arrived at Taranto and took copious notes about the details of the raid. Takeshi had a long meeting with Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, a former classmate and naval aviator. Six months later, in May of 1941, a Japanese naval delegation led by an admiral visited and stayed for several weeks.

The information traveled back to Admiral Isoruko Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet and was instrumental in convincing him and his staff of the feasibility of a successful shallow water torpedo attack against the U.S. Fleet at Pearl Harbor.

The work was started. Torpedoes were modified with special fins to permit shallow water operation. Intelligence agents in Hawaii gathered data on the order of battle of the U.S. Fleet, its anchorage layout, and its scheduled departures and arrivals. During the summer of 1941, the Japanese fleet held maneuvers near the southern home islands and used Kagoshima Bay and its environs as a surrogate for Oahu and Pearl Harbor. Experienced veteran aviators from the Sino-Japanese War were selected for the aircrews and drilled hard. By November, after a series of conferences, the Japanese government decided to open hostilities against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands in December. The Pearl Harbor attack force, six carriers with 423 aircraft, a strong naval escort, and tanker support gathered in the Kurile Islands. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942, their commander, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo

received the coded message, "Climb Mount Niitaka" and the fleet sallied-destination Pearl Harbor. The air group commander for the attack, flying in a Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" was Mitsuo Fuchida!

### *Closing Remarks*

For the rest of the war, Lyster held important commands in naval aviation. When the war ended, he retired as Vice Admiral Sir Arthur Lyster, KCB, CVO, CBE, DSO.

The Maryland pilot, Adrian Warburton, continued to seek out hazardous missions. He was wounded at least once and crashed twice. His reputation grew as a reconnaissance pilot but his unorthodox behavior and failure to follow the bureaucratic procedures of the RAG did not endear him to his superiors. He didn't seem to mind yet he rose to wing commander and was decorated with the DSO and Bar and DFC and Two Bars and an American DFC. In 1944, flying a Lockheed F-5B, the photographic version of the P-38 Lightning, he disappeared over Germany. In 2002, the wreckage of his plane was discovered in Bavaria with some signs of combat damage. A few remains were recovered. In 2003, the BBC documentary series *Timewatch* broadcast "Mystery of the Missing Ace," an account of the discovery and recovery of the relics and and commentary on Warburton's remarkable career.

Of the 42 men who flew on what the Italians call *La Notte di Taranto*, 17 perished before the war came to a close, a 40% loss. The last survivor, Capt "Alfie" Sutton, an observer, died on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

*HMS Illustrious*, after receiving serious bomb damage during the battle for Malta, sailed to the United States and was repaired in Norfolk, Virginia. She then served in the Indian Ocean, returned to the Mediterranean and ended up her combat career fighting in the Pacific. Decommissioning occurred in 1954 and she was struck from the naval rolls in 1956 and scrapped.

And what of the Swordfish? Built as a private venture by Fairey and obsolete when the war commenced, she “soldiered on.” The Swordfish again earned distinction in May of 1941 when a torpedo launched by one of *HMS Ark Royal's* Swordfish severely damaged the steering mechanism of the German Battleship *Bismarck*, leading to its eventual sinking. In February of 1942, the German pocket battleships *Gneisnau* and *Scharnhorst* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* escaped from Brest and headed up channel. Six Swordfish, led by Lt. Commander Eugene Esmonde attempted to intercept them but due to a failure of communication, had no fighter escort. Esmonde and his squadron pressed on and attacked. Messerschmidts and the anti-aircraft batteries of the overwhelmed them and all six aircraft were shot down with the loss of all 18 crewmen. Esmonde was awarded the Victoria Cross.

By war's end, almost 2400 Swordfish had been built and they had racked up the greatest tonnage of shipping sunk by any mark of torpedo plane. She had outlasted both of her replacements: The Fairey Albacore and the Fairey Barracuda. And so, on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945, after a eleven years of estimable service, the Fleet Air Arm retired the the Stringbag.



*MK II Swordfish at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, 2011*



*MK III Swordfish at RAF Museum, Hendon*



*Uncle Steve Need You...to Sell Fruit*