

Old Warden's Glory

A pictorial salute to the world's only flying Gladiator



AT PRESENT there are two examples of the magnificent Gloster Gladiator that are intended to fly again. One of these is in its very earliest stages with Gloucestershire-based Retro Track

and Air. The other can be seen making steady progress towards flight inside The Fighter Collection's hangar at Duxford, Cambs. These two will be very welcome sights in the air when completed.

Spirited performance at Old Warden in 1993 wearing 247 Squadron colours as 'N2308'.

KEY-DUNCAN CUBITT

Since July 1952, the world has basked in the sight of one of the RAF's last biplane fighters in the air. This is G-AMRK, the prized property of the Shuttleworth Collection since November 1960. As can be seen

Gloster Gladiator I G-AMRK

Sep 1938	Built by Gloster at Hucclecote, Glos, for the RAF as L8032, the last of the final batch of Mk.Is. Early history either straight into storage, or not recorded. Certainly on charge at 27 Maintenance Unit (MU) Shawbury, Shropshire by mid-1940.
Oct 11, 1941	Issued to 2 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit (AACU), headquartered at Gosport, Hants. (Unit had several detachments. From, early 1943, at the latest, it was very likely with 'D' Flight at Detling, Kent.)
Mar 28, 1943	Transferred to 1624 (Anti-Aircraft Co-operation) Flight at Detling. Unit formed from 'D' Flight of 2 AACU on Feb 14, 1943.
Jun 9, 1943	Placed into store at 8 MU, Little Rissington, Glos.
Oct 27, 1943	On charge with 61 Operational Training Unit, at Rednal, Shropshire, and believed used in the making of a film about the Greek campaign.
Feb 14, 1944	Suffered a flying accident and issued to Marshalls of Cambridge at Teversham, Cambs, for repair. Work completed May 25.
Sep 28, 1944	Issued again to 8 MU, Little Rissington.
May 25, 1946	Moved to 13 MU, Henlow, Beds, returning to 8 MU on Jun 19.
Feb 23, 1948	Sold to Gloster Aircraft Co and placed into store at Hucclecote. (Also acquired at the same time was Mk.II N5903.)
Oct 13, 1950	To Air Service Training, Hamble, Hants, for use as an instructional airframe. (AST also acquired N5903, but this moved at first to Ansty, Warwickshire then to Hamble.)
Dec 1951	Both L8032 and N5903 acquired by Viv Bellamy and moved to Eastleigh, Hampshire. L8032 restored to flying condition using N5903 as a source of spares.
May 16, 1952	Registered as G-AMRK.
Jun 13, 1952	First flown and finished in natural metal scheme with dark blue registration.
Aug 20, 1953	Acquired by Gloster Aircraft and based at Hucclecote.
1956	Refinished in military markings as 'K8032' (a Mk.I serial) and the colours of 72 Squadron.
Nov 25, 1960	Handed over to the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden, Beds. Repainted as L8032.
1990	Repainted in camouflage as 'N2308' 'HP-B' of 247 Squadron for the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.
Jul 1997	Repainted in Norwegian Army Air Service colours as '423' (port) and '427' (starboard). See page 62 for background.



G-AMRK in its pure civilian scheme, in the early 1950s.

KEY-GORDON SWANBOROUGH COLLECTION



Fine portrait of 'K8032' while in the custody of Gloster and in the colours of 72 Squadron. RUSSELL ADAMS-GLOSTER AIRCRAFT

RIGHT: G-AMRK's cockpit. DAVID STEPHENS COLLECTION

BELOW: Shuttleworth amended the 72 Squadron scheme to give the correct serial number and added the coloured rudder of a Flight Commander's aircraft. KEY-DUNCAN CUBITT



In 1959, as 72 Squadron was making the transition from Gloster Meteor NF.14s to Gloster Javelin FAW.4s and moving from Church Fenton to Leconfield, both Yorkshire, the opportunity was seized to put all the Gloster types the unit had ever operated into formation. As related on page 64, Gloster Aircraft was operating the world's only airworthy Gladiator in 72's colours. As can be seen, the twin jets were struggling to stay with the biplane (!), but the incredible trio was achieved. The jets did not have much longer for the world... Javelin XA755 left 72 to become an instructional airframe in August 1961 and Meteor WS724 joined 60 Squadron before being scrapped in April 1962. GLOSTER

here and on page 62, this attractive aircraft has worn a variety of schemes to emphasize the many air battles that Gladiators were involved in.

TFC's machine – aptly registered G-GLAD – has a history that is closely linked with Shuttleworth's Romeo-Kilo. Both were acquired by master aircraft restorer Vivian Bellamy from Air Service Training and moved to his Flightways workshop at Eastleigh.

The TFC example (N5903) was used as a source of spares to bring the other back to flight status. Most important in this was the fitting of the Bristol Mercury VIIIAS into the Mk.I airframe. This involved considerable engineering 'surgery' including accepting the reduction gearing.

After its use as a 'Christmas Tree' for G-AMRK, N5903 followed the 'flier' to Hucclecote and then to Old Warden in November 1960. In the mid-1970s, Shuttleworth decided that it no longer needed a back-up and presented N5903 on loan to the

Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton, Somerset. It was intended to restore the airframe to Sea Gladiator status.

However, the potential for N5903 to get up and fly was a compelling option. N5903 was acquired by TFC and moved to Duxford in November 1994. Restoration has come on at an impressive rate ever since.

Subsequently, in an arrangement with the Jet Age Museum and Retro Track and Air, the Fleet Air Arm Museum has gained one of the salvaged frames from Norway (see table) which will form the basis of a full static Sea Gladiator restoration.

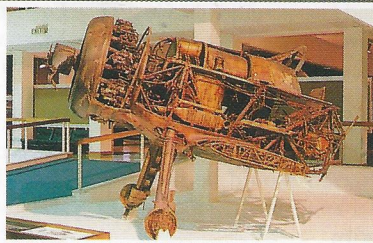
The role of the RAF's 263 Squadron and its operation from the frozen Lake Lesjaskog in late 1940, tends to dominate Gladiator air combat during the invasion of Norway.

The current scheme worn by Shuttleworth's Gladiator serves to correct that image and focuses on the earlier gallantry of the Norwegian forces themselves.

Gloster Gladiator Survivors

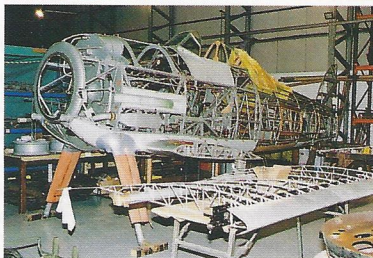
K8042	Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon, London. Displayed in 87 Squadron colours
L8032	Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden. G-AMRK, airworthy in Norwegian colours – see page 62
N5520	National War Museum, Valetta, Malta – see page 66
N5579*	Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton
N5589*	Current status unknown. Salvaged frame
N5628*	Salvaged forward fuselage, displayed at the RAF Museum, Hendon, London
N5641*	Royal Norwegian Air Force Museum, Bodø, Norway. Displayed in 263 Squadron colours as 'HE-G'
N5719	Retro Track and Air, Glos. Restoration project, registered as G-CBHO
N5903	The Fighter Collection, Duxford, Cambs. Under restoration to flying condition, registered as G-GLAD
N5914*	Jet Age Museum, Staverton, Glos. Restoration project
Fv278	Royal Swedish Air Force Museum, Linköping, Sweden. Displayed in F19 Wing colours. (Swedish designation J8A)

Notes: All are Mk.IIs other than K8042, L8032, N5520 (Sea Gladiator I) and Fv278 (Mk.I equivalent). Airframes marked * were all operated by 263 Squadron from the frozen waters of Lake Lesjaskog in late April 1940 and were lost in action during raids on April 25 and 27.



The unrestored remains of Mk.II N5628 serve as a stark image of the Blitzkrieg. It had the briefest of operational careers. Shipped out on HMS 'Glorious' on April 22, 1940, it landed on Lake Lesjaskog on April 25 and the frozen surface was promptly bombed by He 111s. It was salvaged from the depths in 1970.

KEY-DUNCAN CUBITT



In many ways G-AMRK's 'shadow' for many years, N5903 (G-GLAD) is making considerable progress towards flight at Duxford.

KEY-NIGEL PRICE