

Barracuda saved from extinction

A deal has been signed between the KVPL's (Kiltech Vehicle Protection Ltd) Blue Bird Project Team to handle the restoration of what will become the only WW2 Barracuda torpedo bomber.

With over 2500 aircraft built, the Fairey Barracuda was the Royal Navy's most prolific aircraft during WW2 yet unlike other more iconic aircraft of its era, none were retained for posterity.

Says Dave Morris Curator of Aircraft "We have been collecting sections of Barracuda since the early 1970s. We were able to rebuild the nose section a few years ago, however only now, through the revolutionary restoration methods developed by the Bluebird Project Team, has the process of identification and restoration of the rest of the aircraft become feasible"

Each piece will be transferred to the KVPL's Blue Bird Project Team workshop in Newcastle where they will undergo a unique process involving softening, straightening, stretching and reforming of each crumpled piece.

The process was developed for the restoration of Donald Campbell's Blue Bird which was retrieved from the depths of Coniston Water in 2001 following the tragic accident in 1967 when he lost his life in a water speed record attempt.

The Blue Bird Project Team relies on a workforce of highly skilled volunteers however additional funding of some £60,000 is required to complete the main task of rebuilding the fuselage of the aircraft.

The contract agreement was formally announced on October 27th at 12.00hrs by the Fleet Air Arm Museum's Director Graham Mottram and KVPL's Technical Director Bill Smith. Extensive work on the Barracuda will begin when Blue Bird is completed, which is hoped to be sometime next year. It is estimated that the Barracuda project will take some 5 years to complete and once restored the aircraft will form part of the National Collection.

The announcement was made at the Museum's Reserve Collection Open Day where the crumpled pieces of Barracuda taken from as many as six wartime crash sites can be seen positioned as if a gigantic crime scene was being investigated.