

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

GLOSTER GLADIATOR Mk.I K8042/8372M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 74/A/17

- Sep 35 Ordered from Gloster Aircraft Ltd as part of contract No.442476/35 for 180 Gladiators, serial numbers K7892-K8055 and L7608-L7623.
- 27 Aug 37 Delivered new to No.1 Aircraft Storage Unit. Fitted with 840hp Bristol Mercury VIIIA Engine, number A113818/40089. Airframe c/n 40468.
- 13 Feb 39 No.5 MU, Kemble (Aircraft Storage Unit).
- 01 Jun 41 To Gloster Aircraft Co. Possibly for updating to current standards.
- 29 Aug 41 Station Flight, A&AEE, Boscombe Down.
- 22 Sep 41 CRD - Controller of Research and Development. Used at Boscombe Down for a short and successful trial with an extra pair of 0.303 in. guns under the top wing, giving a total of six guns, each with 425 rounds; very slight damage was caused by ejected cartridges from the top guns. Photo - The Secret Years - Flight Testing At Boscombe Down (T. Mason) p.57.
- 20 Apr 42 No.27 MU, Shawbury, Salop (Aircraft Storage Unit).
- 24 May 42 RAF Ternhill, Salop.
- 27 May 42 No.5 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit, Ternhill. No.5 (P) AFU was the new designation for the former No.5 FTS as of 13 Apr 42, flying Hurricanes and Masters, mainly.
- 27 Oct 43 No.61 OTU Rednal, Shropshire. 61 OTU was a single-seat fighter trainer unit, using various code letters including DE-.

The allocation of K8042 to this unit may be explained by a passage in David Smiths' article 'Airfield Archaeology No.19 - Rednal' in 'FlyPast' magazine, February 1985 p18-20. In October 1943 a film unit, 'Independent Producers' arrived to shoot scenes for a film of the book 'Signed With Their Honour' - a Wellington and nine Gladiators were to be assigned to them and would stay for 2 to 3 months. It is not known if this many aircraft did arrive but 61 OTU certainly did have a few Gladiators (including N5903, now with the Fighter Collection, between 11 Nov 43 and Jan 44, and Shuttleworth's L8032, which arrived also on 27 October 1943) and perhaps inherited them when the film unit left, although the Squadron ORB at the PRO records the loss of two in a mid-air collision. The film was a 'Factional' account of No.80 Squadron's Gladiator operations in Greece in 1941.

- 11 Feb 44 To Marshalls Flying Services of Cambridge at Teversham, Cambs.

- 14 Feb 44 Damaged - Cat.B - Repaired in Works.
- 17 Oct 44 No.8 MU Little Rissington (Aircraft Storage Unit).
- 1945 Earmarked as one of a number of 'obsolete aircraft for display purposes' (PRO AIR 2/10, 187) and held in long-term storage.
- Mar 46 Noted on home census of RAF aircraft.
- 16 Mar 48 Struck off charge as part of a clear out that year of display aircraft-probably the RAFs' last Gladiator, though L8032, now with Shuttleworth, which had been displayed in Hyde Park in June 1946, was not sold back to the makers from No. 8 MU until 23 February 1948 along with the Fighter Collection's Gladiator II N5903 (Glosters sold them on to Air Service Training at Hamble in October 1950). K8042 seems to have been retained however as a historical airframe.
- Sep 50 Displayed on Horseguards Parade. Aviation News 15-28 Jul 83, p.180.
- Nov 54 Part of the official Air Historical Branch Collection stored at RAF Stanmore by this date.
- Jul 57 Stored alongside many other AHB aircraft at No.15 MU, Wroughton, Wilts.
- c.1958-59 Stored, in camouflage scheme, with AHB collection at RAF Fulbeck, Lincs.
- 1960 Airfield Review 66 (Aug 94) records delivery of K8042 by road from Cranwell to RAF Biggin Hill, Kent.
- 12-18 Sep 60 Displayed on Horseguards Parade for Battle of Britain week. Photos: Aviation News 15-28 Jul 83, p.180 & Military Aviation Review Feb 79 p.26; Airfix Magazine Dec 1960 p.318; Wrecks and Relics – The Album p.54 (colour).
- 1961 Definitely stored at Biggin Hill by this date. Still there, painted in an inaccurate camouflage scheme, in 1963. The aircraft retained these colours until 1967. Photo - Veteran and Vintage Aircraft (Hunt -013355) p.30.
- 10 May 65 Displayed at No.71 MU RAF Bicester, Oxon for royal visit.
- Nov 65 At RAFM store at RAF Henlow, Beds by this date.
- Feb 67 Refurbished at Henlow by RAFM technicians. See original restoration log in aircraft department files. Photo - Air Pictorial Nov 1972 p.416.
- 14 Jun 68 Displayed at RAF's 50th Anniversary Royal Review, Abingdon, newly restored to the markings of the CO's aircraft of No.87 Squadron at Debden

in 1938 to show a typical Fighter colour scheme of that period, though retaining its original serial number.
Photos; Control Column Vol. 2 No. 5 p.4; Aeromilitaria Winter 2002 rear cover (colour)

- 05 Jul 68 Displayed at Founders' Day Air Display, RAF Hendon.
- Sep 68 Displayed at Horse Guards Parade during Battle of Britain week.
 Photo: Scale Models Aug 73 p.546; Flight International 3 Oct 1968
 p.538; Aviation News 15 Jul - 28 Jul 1983 p.180.
- 30 Nov 71 Delivered from Henlow to RAFM Hendon by this date. Museum opened
 November 1972 - displayed in Main Hall. Photos; Control Column Feb
 1972; Air Pictorial Nov 1972 p.417
- 5 Sep 73 Allotted RAF instructional serial 8372M.
- 1978 Moved to new Battle of Britain Museum where it remains on display.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a number of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.

747 Gladiators were built, over 490 of them for the RAF. Several survive in Museum Collections:

- K8042 RAF Museum Hendon (Mk.1)
- L8032 (G-AMRK) Shuttleworth Collection - Airworthy (Mk.1)
- N5520 `Faith' - Fuselage only at National War Museum, Valetta, Malta GC
- N5579 Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton – see below. Ex Norway.
- N5628 Forward Fuselage only at RAF Museum, Hendon
- N5641 Norwegian Air Force Museum – ex 263 Squadron
- N5719 Under restoration in Gloucestershire by Retro Track and Air as G-CBHO.
 Ex Norway/263 Sqn.
- N5903 To Fighter Collection Duxford 1995; under restoration to fly as G-GLAD.
- N5914 Gloucestershire Aviation Collection 1998/Jet Age Museum, Staverton. Ex
 Norway crash site recovery to incorporate parts from N5697 and
 N5698 also from Norwegian crash sites.

The GAC will use these and ex Lake Lesjaskog Gladiator components from the RAF Museum store at Cardington to produce a composite basic fuselage for the Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton

(‘N5579’ handed over July 2002) and another for the Norwegian Air Force Museum.

‘Fv278/F’ Swedish Air Force Museum, new to Sweden 1937. In Finnish Colours.

It is interesting that the UKs other two complete surviving Gladiators also served with No.61 OTU. L8032, still airworthy with the Shuttleworth Collection, joined the unit the same day as K8042. The Fighter Collection's under restoration N5903 joined the unit 11 November 1943. It is just possible that all three aircraft joined the unit for the film work.

Other 61 OTU Gladiators included K7898, K7927, K8004.

TEXT - ANDREW SIMPSON