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The Ju88s of the North!

Birger Larsen, Curator Norwegian Aviation Museum, Bodø.

The recovery of two Ju88s from the extreme north of Norway is finally met with success.

The first part of the recovery took place 1999 when an expedition from the Norwegian Aviation Museum recovered four engines, the tail section of one of the Ju88s and a lot of loose details around the two wrecks.

The two Ju88s was lying in the area of Kinnarodden close to the North Cape. There are no roads going out to Kinnarodden and the only means of transportation is either by helicopter, by boat or simply by walking a distance of about 20 Kms. The weather in the area is shifting very fast and you always have the possibility of fog coming in from the sea on a short notice!

Strong winds also put restrictions to the dismantling of the aeroplanes because of relatively light components simply will blow away with a resulting structural damage. This has to be avoided since this means extra work in the restoration process!

The aim of the first expedition of 1999 was twofold. First of all we wanted a closer look of what to expect of work in the dismantling process of the wings. Also we would like to recover as much of the loose components as possible. Because of a lot of equipment were to be carried, we choose to use a boat for transportation.

After putting up the tents we set out for the first of the Ju88s. This particular airplane (W. No.0880797) was in a relatively poor condition. Through the years people have found useful components in the wreckage. They even have taken away big pieces of the fuselage selling it as scrap metal. However the basis of the two engines, the wings and the centersection of the fuselage was relatively intact and could be used for replacement parts.

We decided to disconnect the R.H. wing from the fuselage. This way the main components would be within the slingload capabilities for the available helicopters. Half way into this process the work had to be postponed because of the tools were broken! We had not allowed for the relatively heavy corrosion of the mounting nuts for the wings!

Instead we had to settle for the collection of loose parts and the slingload preparations of the engines.

Next day we hiked to the top of the mountain to make the slingload preparations for the second (and the best) Ju88. (W.No. 0881203)

Here we could only disconnect the engines and prepare the (hacked off) tail section for slingload. Because of a rapid deteriorating weather we soon had to return to the camp.

Two days with storm and rain kept us inside the tents.

The storm also meant that the helicopter to be used for picking up the engines and the other parts could not come. A relatively wet and exhausted expeditionary crew had to return by boat when the weather improved.

A month later the engines, the tail section and the other details were picked up by a Sea-King helicopter from 330 Sqdn. based at Banak AFB.

Then relatively few things happened until the summer of 2001. The Norwegian Aviation Museum decided that this was to be the year of the total recovery of the two airplanes!

The beginning of the month of August saw us again out there. This time with more people and better tools. Altogether six people were assigned for doing the dismantling and preparations. Lessons learned from the first expedition also saw new and improved tools for the dismantling of the wings. Also with us was two German journalists to cover the expedition.

Again going by boat we had a relatively nice weather this time. After putting up the camp close to the seaside we decided to spend the night in camp and go for the Ju88 on the top of the mountain first. (1203)

Next morning we had fog on top of the mountain but this cleared away after arriving on the site. The first wing disconnected relatively easy but half way into the disconnecting of the second wing we again had only broken tools.

What to do now?

Suddenly the rattling noise of a Sea-King were heard in the distance! And – there came the helicopter from 330 Sqdn. They were on a rescue mission near by and after finishing this operation had decided to pay us a visit. A short briefing resulted in the helicopter taking off for picking up the much needed tool at Mehamn Airport 20 Kms away!

After this the remaining two nuts disconnected without problems and close to six in the evening we could return to the camp. Phase one completed!

Next day we decided to split the crew into two groups. Two members were to again climb to the top of the mountain for preparing the Ju for slingload. Special connections were to be put on for making the hook-up for the slingload as easy and as safe as possible. Also the other smaller components to be recovered needed special preparations for a safe slingload.

Three hours after arrival at the top we had it all done.

The remaining members of the crew hiked inland to the second Junkers. Close to three o`clock this Ju was also readied for the helicopter.

Since we now had all preparations done we made a call for the boat to pick us up and at nine in the evening we had a beer and a pizza at the local hotel in Mehamn.

Next day the helicopter were to come to make the slingloads. 1030 Hrs. saw the arrival of the Sea-King but so also the fog! Only one flight could be done before the helicopter had to pick up the loadcrew and return to Mehamn Airport.

Then nothing much happened until September 25th. I had almost lost hope for the safe recovery of the Jus this year. The authorities of Mehamn Airport had made a message asking us to pick up what was recovered in August. The parts were lying in the area where they put the snow cleared away from the runway. The winter were fast coming and they needed the area!

The 26th I made a call to tell them that we had been waiting for the rest of the parts to be airlifted from the mountain. Oh, yes you can come now – the answer was, the helicopter has already made three slingloads and it is now out there to make the fourth! Capt. Norderval and his crew had not let us down.

The October 8th. again saw us up at Mehamn for the repacking of the Junkers. This time for the transportation by boat. The preparations lasted for two days. Another week and the boat arrived for picking up the parts. The next day the snow fell in Mehamn!

The two Junkers now resides in Bodø. The fuselage of 088 1203 is inside the workshop and the rest in the storage hangar waiting for necessary preservation to be done.

A possible cooperation on the restoring of the Junkers is to be negotiated between Teknik Museum, Berlin and the Norwegian Aviation Museum. Hopefully this effort will add two more Junkers Ju88s to the list of restored Junkers of the world!

FACTS ABOUT THE TWO JUNKERS JU88 RECOVERED.

No: 1:

W.No: 088 1203

Type: Ju88D-1

Markings: 4N+EH

Unit: 1(F)/22

Date: February 17th. 1943.

History: Started from Kirkenes AB to bomb russian ship A.Marti (3500 t) south of Bjørnøya (Bear Island) Was hit by flak and had to make an emergency landing at Kinnarodden. The aircraft had flak damage in left engine area. None of crew hurt in the landing. German airmen from Banak AB later salvaged some important equipment from the wreck. Some of the damage done to the wreck was because of this.

Sold by the Norwegian Government to a team of four from the Mehamn area. Intended to be sold as scrap metal.

Was 1998 purchased by the Norwegian Aviation Museum.

Crew:

1: Fw. Gerhard Kunert. (F)

2: Lt. Hans Krüger. (B)

3: U.Uffz. Fritz Sundergeld. (Bf)

4: U.Uffz. Georg Lechner. (Bm)

2:

W.No: 088 0797.

Type: Ju88C-4.

Markings: 4D+HA.

Unit: KG30.

History:

Made an emergency landing from the sea. All three crewmembers wounded.

Bought by the same four locals after the war.

Purchased by the Norwegian Aviation Museum, Bodø 1998.

Crew:

1: St. Kapitän Kuno Gotthard. (F)

2: Ob. Lt. Helmut Lütgens. (B)

3: St. Fw. Willi Hillebrecht. (Bf)